

DIAMOND~DICK

BOYS BEST

JR WEEKLY JR.

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 235 William St., N.Y.

No. 294.

Price, Five Cents.

DIAMOND DICK JR'S MARKED BULLET

OR
THE WRECK OF THE FAST MAIL



BY
THE AUTHOR
OF 'DIAMOND DICK'

DIAMOND DICK, JR., CAUGHT CAMERON AND BORE HIM VIOLENTLY BACKWARD TO THE ROOF OF THE CAR.

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OR,

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By the author of "DIAMOND DICK."

CHAPTER I.

WHAT HAPPENED ABOARD THE FREIGHT.

"He'll be killed, sure!"

"No, he won't; he'll make it!"

"By thunder! I couldn't have done that better myself."

Freight No. 13 was waiting on a siding at Tucson for the eastern limited to pass.

As the passenger coaches went thundering through the town a man appeared on the platform of one of them.

He looked at the caboose of the freight as he was whirled by.

Some one or something caught his gaze and he swung himself down on the lowest step. Then, with perfect coolness, he threw himself backward, released the handlebars and dropped on the ground.

It was admirably done, for he did not lose his feet. The man's recklessness and final success elicited,

from the conductor and brakeman of No. 3, the remarks that head this chapter.

The way now being clear, the freight started.

As the caboose swung past, the man who had made the dangerous leap deftly mounted it.

After lingering a moment on the platform, he went inside and sat down.

There were two passengers in the caboose besides the conductor and brakeman.

One of the passengers was middle-aged and wore an iron-gray mustache.

It seemed impossible for him to keep his eyes off the man who had just boarded the train in so singular a manner.

The second passenger was a youth, handsome of feature and graceful of form.

He was reading a newspaper.

Out of the corners of his eyes, however, he watched the passenger who had boarded the train at Tucson.

This individual was well dressed.

His clothes were cut in the very latest style and he wore patent-leather shoes.

His linen and neckwear were faultless.

He was tall—probably all of six feet in height—well-formed and extremely good looking.

His eyes were black and piercing and his mustache and goatee were carefully trimmed.

To the youth's thinking, however, this man had a bad eye.

There was a strange play of glances between him and the man with the iron-gray mustache.

At last the latter got up, visibly nervous and ill at ease, and climbed into the cupola.

The man with the black eyes followed.

Shortly before this the conductor and brakeman had left the caboose and the youth was sole observer of the queer actions on the part of the other two passengers.

Opening a window in the cupola the man with the iron-gray mustache stepped out on the roof of the caboose.

A moment later the other followed.

Not a word had, as yet, been spoken; but, nevertheless, this affair was getting decidedly interesting.

The youth heard the footsteps of the two men pass from the roof of the caboose to the top of the next car.

This decided him to see the matter through, and he hurried to the front platform, caught the iron ladder, and climbed up.

The man with the iron-gray mustache was sitting on the brake. In front was the other passenger.

The youth was unnoticed by either of the men.

"Cameron," said the man on the brake, "what do you mean by following me in this way?"

"Are you afraid of me?" queried the other, with a sneer.

"No."

"You know as well as I do, Gillsey, why I am following you. You have my future in your hands, and I want to know how you are going to answer that letter from the colonel?"

"You are a sneak and a rascal, Cameron," cried Gillsey, warmly; "you are even worse than that! You are an out—"

"Enough of that! There is no doubt but that you know a good deal about me, and there is one thing I am here to find out. How are you going to answer that letter?"

"It is already answered and was mailed in Tombstone to-day."

Cameron gave a growl of satisfaction.

"It will not leave Tombstone by the coach until to-morrow morning and will catch the fast mail some time to-morrow afternoon. Gillsey, that letter will never reach its destination!"

Gillsey smiled ironically.

"Even though it does not, I am bound for the fort now to tell the colonel everything I know about you! After mailing the letter I had an idea that you might try to intercept it, so I determined, at the last moment, to answer the colonel's inquiries in person."

A look black as a thundercloud came over Cameron's face.

With the quickness of lightning he drew a brace of revolvers from his pockets.

The freight was thundering along on a down grade, and the noise was deafening.

"Then, Gillsey," hissed Cameron, through his clinched teeth, "neither you nor that letter will ever reach the fort. You, and you alone, stand between me and my freedom. You are determined to tell the colonel all and wreck my future. There is but one thing for me to do—I am going to kill you!"

This was spoken in the voice of a cool-headed, desperate man.

Cameron had prepared himself to commit murder and was about to do it.

"Would you kill me in cold blood?" gasped Gillsey.

"I am obliged to do it in self-defense. Otherwise, you would send me to—the gallows!"

Slowly Cameron raised his weapons, his black eyes glittering along the barrels.

Gillsey carried no weapons whatever.

He merely folded his arms across his breast and waited.

He was pale, but showed no other indication of alarm.

Just as Cameron's fingers were flexing upon the triggers, however, the youth, who had crept silently upon him from behind, caught him about the waist and bore him violently backward to the roof of the car.

Cameron struggled like a fiend, but the youth held him in a grip of iron.

Rising to his feet, Gillsey started toward them.

At that moment, with a suddenness that was startling, the forward part of the freight went rumbling over a bridge.

"Down!" cried the youth to Gillsey; "down, on your life!"

But it was too late.

The caboose passed under the bridge, and the upper beams struck Gillsey squarely in the back.

He was hurled from the car, and, an instant later, the youth heard a loud splash, as he fell into the river below.

With a wild yell, Cameron leaped from the youth's arms, turned and threw himself upon him like a tiger.

Just then the train slackened speed, left the bridge and started on an up grade.

In spite of all the youth could do, Cameron's struggles brought them closer and closer to the edge of the roof of the car.

"We'll both go over!" howled Cameron, with an insane laugh. "Let the best man pull through with his scalp. I know you, Diamond Dick, Jr.! This is once that you tackled a larger contract than you can carry out."

Barely were these words uttered when the struggling combatants rolled from the roof of the car.

Had the train been going at anything but a slow rate of speed, both must inevitably have met their fate.

Diamond Dick, Jr.—for the youth was, indeed, our invincible young hero, Bertie Wade—felt himself whirling through the air; then he struck the earth, the momentum at which he was going tumbling him roughly along for a distance of at least ten feet.

It was a terrible experience, and it is not to be wondered at that Bertie lost consciousness.

When he recovered his senses he found that he was lying on the rocks with three section men bending over him.

One of them was forcing liquor down his throat.

"Begorra," said one, as Bertie opened his eyes, "he's comin' to his sines, so he is."

"Sure an' he's as good as a dozen dead men yet," put in another.

"Whisht," said the third, "he's got somethin' on his mind. Phat is it, avick?"

"Where's the other fellow?" queried Bertie, thinking of Cameron.

"Phat other felly, me b'y?"

"Didn't you find some one else with me?"

"Divil a wan. Ye was lyin' roight here, so ye was, as we came along on the handcar, an' sure we t'ought ye was dead. Phat happened to yez?"

"I fell from the freight."

"Fell from the freight! Howly murther! Then it's pickin' yez oop on a scoop we ought t' be afther, an' holdin' a wake over th' pieces. Begorra, I'd as soon fall from a balloon!"

Bertie felt himself all over.

He was bruised, but was glad to find that no bones were broken.

"Where do you men come from?" he asked, as he got upon his feet.

"Tucson."

"Are you going back soon?"

"At wance. Will yez be afther goin' back wid us?"

"Yes."

"Then sthep on the handcar an' we'll be off."

The handcar was on the rails waiting, and they all got aboard.

A moment later they were spinning down the track.

At the bridge Bertie had them stop for a short time while he searched up and down the banks for some trace of Gillsey.

His search was fruitless, however, and he finally gave it up, and returned to the handcar.

An hour later he was back in Tucson.

As he started for the hotel he heard a clatter of hoofs behind him.

Looking around, he saw a United States trooper galloping toward him and motioning to him to stop.

Bertie waited.

"Are you Diamond Dick, Jr.?" asked the cavalryman.

"Yes."

"I thought I could not be mistaken. You are wanted by Colonel Clark, at Fort McPherson. Can you go back with me at once?"

"What am I wanted for?"

The trooper shook his head.

"That is something I do not know."

Bertie reflected for a moment.

"All right," he finally said; "I'll get a horse and join you at the hotel in ten minutes."

CHAPTER II.

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE MASQUERADE.

"Boom!"

As the sunset gun at Fort McPherson echoed and re-echoed across the parade ground, "Old Glory" came tumbling down from the top of the flagstaff and was caught in the arms of the stalwart soldier below.

"Right forward, force right, march!"

At this hoarse command the long line of soldiers broke into fours from "company front," and marched away to the trim white barracks below the more pretentious officers' quarters.

Soon everything was silent about the fort.

In his office the colonel in command was tramping nervously back and forth.

There was a look of deep anxiety on his face, and occasionally he would pause and peer out into the gathering shadows through one of the windows.

"Strange," he muttered, "that the orderly hasn't returned. He should have been here an hour ago."

He turned to resume his walk. He had taken but a few steps, however, when the beat of horses' hoofs fell on his ear.

"There," muttered the colonel, throwing himself into a chair, "he has returned at last."

The hoofbeats drew nearer and finally stopped in front of the colonel's office. Then a knock fell on the door.

"Come in!" a trooper entered, followed by Diamond Dick, Jr.

"Mr. Wade, colonel," said the trooper, stepping to one side and saluting.

"Very well, Hawkins; you may go."

The trooper withdrew, and the colonel got up and shook Bertie's hand.

"I am Colonel Clark, commanding this post," said he. "You are the young man who is known throughout the country as Diamond Dick, Jr., are you not?"

"Yes."

"I heard you were at Tucson and I sent to engage your services. Can you give up a few days of your time to Uncle Sam? I will see that you are remunerated for your trouble."

"What is it you wish me to do? Money alone would not tempt me."

"The work I have in view requires a person of tact and courage. You will understand this when I tell you that three men whom I have dispatched, one

after the other, to do the work, have never come back. The supposition is that they have been killed."

"Please tell me exactly what the work consists of."

"Somewhere around here, in the mountains, a band of white renegades have their headquarters. They have made themselves very troublesome, killing people, robbing peaceable travelers, and running off stock. I have received instructions to break up the gang at any cost. The leader of the outlaws is a man known as Red Cameron. He is a bloody wretch and seems to divine instinctively every move I have attempted against him, for all my work, so far, has been of no avail. If I could find out where Red Cameron has his rendezvous, however, I feel that I could wipe out his gang in short order."

"And you wish me to find out where the rendezvous is?"

"Yes."

Bertie passed his eyes about the room.

On the colonel's desk was a framed photograph that chained his attention.

Rising, Diamond Dick, Jr., approached the desk, picked up the photograph and examined it closely.

There was a strange look on his face as he turned to the colonel.

"Whose picture is this?" he asked.

"That is a picture of Henry Gordon. My only daughter, Grace, is engaged to marry him. I presume the wedding will take place some time during the coming week. A fine young man, Mr. Wade!"

Bertie was dumfounded.

Could he believe his eyes and ears?

The picture before him was that of the man with the black eyes who had tried so hard to commit murder on the freight train!

The man's name was Cameron.

Could it be possible that Red Cameron, the notorious renegade and the lover of the colonel's daughter, were one and the same?

"Colonel," said Bertie, "are you acquainted with a man by the name of Gillsey?"

"Yes; he's an old friend of mine, and has been in this country for thirty years. I wrote him the other day and asked if he knew anything about Red Cameron."

As the colonel finished speaking a band began playing out on the parade ground.

"What is that music for?" queried Bertie.

"There is a masquerade ball in the gymnasium to-night, and the band is out in full force."

"Will your daughter be there?"

"Yes; and all the other officers' wives and daughters."

"Will Mr. Gordon be present?"

"No; business has detained him in Tucson."

"How will your daughter be dressed?"

"As a witch. But why do you ask?"

"I wish to attend this ball. I feel that it will help me in my search for Red Cameron's rendezvous."

"I can't see the connection," returned the colonel, "but I will arrange it. It was my intention to attend the ball myself, but I have other business on hand and cannot go. My costume is at your disposal."

"Thank you."

"You will find it on a chair in the room yonder. You may put it on now, if you wish. I see the maskers have started for the gymnasium."

"Very well."

Bertie thereupon went into the rear room.

In a few moments he came out disguised in the somber habiliments of a monk of La Trappe.

"Great!" cried the Colonel; "you look like the simon-pure article."

"You may not see me again for some time," said Bertie, "but I promise you this: When next we meet I will have the pleasure of handing over to you the person of Red Cameron."

"Impossible! You cannot capture such a man alone."

"We shall see," returned Bertie. "Now for the ball."

Our hero laughed slightly to himself as he crossed the parade ground to the brilliantly-lighted gymnasium building.

"This is a new one for me," he muttered; "but, if I am not mistaken, there's a big surprise in store for the colonel, and hot times ahead for both of us."

Reaching the entrance, he walked unquestioned into the ballroom.

Here everything was in a giddy whirl.

He saw the colonel's daughter dancing, and then, not wishing to make himself too conspicuous, he retired to an obscure corner and watched the brilliant scene from behind a bank of foliage.

He had not been seated long when a man, dressed as a Mexican caballero, walked slowly up and seated himself directly in front of where he was sitting.

The caballero was accompanied by a man in a cowboy costume.

Bertie was entirely screened by the plants in front of him.

"I tell you, Jose, there's likely to be murder committed to-night," said the caballero; "that lieutenant is making himself confoundedly obstreperous. I shan't stand his insults much longer."

"Keep your nerve," returned the cowboy.

"I always do that. I've got to dance with the fair senorita and these .44s are awkward things to carry without a belt. I'm going to tuck them away under these flower pots and leave them till I get through with that waltz."

The caballero suited his action to the word, and he and the cowboy then walked away.

Bertie reached for the revolvers and drew them toward him.

His first intention was to confiscate them—but he suddenly changed his mind.

Removing the loaded cylinders of both revolvers he took out the shells and marked the projecting lead of each one with an "X."

He did this with his knife, and scratched the mark deep into the bullet.

While he was at work two other masqueraders, a Roman soldier and an Apache buck, took the seats recently vacated by the caballero and the cowboy.

"He has challenged me," said the Roman soldier, "and I have selected swords. The combat will take place in the storeroom at once."

"I don't like the looks of it," returned the Apache.

"Why?"

"You are fighting simply because you are mad at each other, not because you have any grievance."

"Henry Gordon is not supposed to be here to-night."

"So I have heard."

"Well, he is here."

"Impossible! Miss Clark would know it if he were."

"I shall prove that he is here. Will you be my second, or not?"

"Of course I will."

"Then come with me."

They got up and went away.

Having finished his work with the revolvers, Bertie put them back where he had found them.

Then he stepped out from his concealment just in

time to see the Roman soldier and the Apache brave disappear in a small room in the rear of the gymnasium. Leaving the ballroom, he went outside, and came around to the rear of the building to the place where he believed the storeroom to be.

At this place there was a window, and, as it was a warm night, the lower sash was raised.

Suddenly a light appeared in the room and a curtain was dropped across the open window.

Bertie advanced noiselessly and drew the curtain to one side sufficiently to give him a peephole.

A queer sight met his eyes.

The room contained no furniture whatever.

Confronting each other with drawn cavalry sabres stood the Roman soldier and the caballero.

To one side, silently watching, were the Apache brave and the cowboy.

"Engage!" said the Apache, in a low voice, dropping a handkerchief.

The men sprang at each other, and, for some moments nothing could be heard but the clash of steel against steel, and the hoarse breathing of the combatants.

Suddenly the Roman soldier threw up his hands and dropped to the floor.

The caballero instantly sank on one knee beside him.

Reaching upward, quick as a flash, the wounded man snatched the domino from the caballero's face.

"Gordon!" muttered the Roman soldier.

Then his head fell back and he became unconscious.

"Red Cameron!" exclaimed Diamond Dick, Jr., under his breath.

With an oath, Cameron sprang to his feet, rushed to the window and leaped through.

A horse was standing near, and he leaped into the saddle, and was off like the wind.

In that wild race, Diamond Dick, Jr., was not far behind.

CHAPTER III.

WRECKING THE FAST MAIL.

In the wild chase from Fort McPherson Red Cameron managed to evade Diamond Dick, Jr.

Bertie was not ready, yet, however, to capture the renegade.

If the lieutenant had been killed, or if Gillsey had

met his fate in the river, it was high time the desperado was taken into custody; but Bertie had no means of knowing how badly either of his supposed victims had been injured.

In the small hours of the morning Bertie rode into Tucson.

Believing this to be the town in which the outlaw often stopped under a name and in a disguise which successfully cloaked his identity, he spent some hours in beating about the places which such a character would naturally frequent.

But this was all to no purpose, and Bertie finally decided that it would be best for him to strike directly into the Sierra Catalina Mountains and hunt for the rendezvous of Red Cameron's men.

In this way, he would have no difficulty in finally locating Red Cameron himself.

Returning to the hotel, Diamond Dick, Jr., caught a few hours' rest and then took the fast mail train west.

As the train whirled across the desert, Bertie rested his head on his hand and grew reflective.

He was deep in his thoughts when there came an abrupt hissing of the air brakes in the car, the wheels scraped along over the track at a reduced rate of speed, and finally the entire train came to a stop with a thunderous crash.

The forward end of the coach Bertie was in was cast high into the air and then dropped broadside over into a ditch beside the track.

Bertie was thrown violently forward against the next seat and rebounded and fell into the aisle.

Few people in the car were at all injured, but the screams of the panic-stricken women and children were something terrible to hear.

Bertie lost no time through inactivity.

As soon as he settled it in his own mind that the train had been ditched, he knocked out a window and began dragging out the passengers.

When all in that coach were released he went forward to discover the nature and extent of the accident.

Some one had turned a switch and sent the fast mail upon a siding.

So swiftly was the switch taken that the drivers of the engine had left the track.

The engineer and fireman had jumped, thus saving their lives.

The mail car had telescoped with the tender of the

locomotive, but the mail agent had miraculously escaped, only to meet death in another form.

He was drawn out on the sand, and the engineer and two passengers were bending over him.

One of the passengers seemed to be a physician, for he had a pair of forceps in his hand and was probing a wound in the man's body.

"What's the matter?" asked Bertie.

"Train was ditched by some one," replied the engineer.

"Any one killed?"

"No one—unless it is Andy here. He seems to be pretty close to his end. He wasn't killed in the wreck, either. He was shot."

"By whom?"

"Dunno. I heard a pistol shot right after I jumped from the cab an' saw two men ridin' off with a mail sack."

"The scoundrels!" cried Bertie, anger and indignation mounting to his face. "Just for that mail bag they wrecked the train and ran the risk of killing and maiming every passenger."

"Here's the bullet," said the physician, holding up a piece of lead between his bloody forceps.

"And the mail agent is dead," said the other passenger; "he just breathed his last."

"Then this bullet was the one that killed him."

With these words the doctor dropped the ensanguined object on the ground.

Bertie picked up the bullet, curiously, wiped it off on a wisp of grass, and looked it over.

No sooner had his eye rested on the little, oblong projectile than he gave a start of surprise.

There, upon its side, was the mark of an "X," his own mark, which recalled the conversation that had taken place between Gillsey and Cameron on the roof of the freight car.

Gillsey said he had mailed a letter in Tombstone.

The letter would be on this train.

Cameron declared the letter should never reach its destination.

He had taken this bloody way of stopping it.

As Bertie stood on the railroad track and looked at the work this desperate outlaw had wrought he had but one thought:

"Red Cameron shall be brought to justice. I will see that that letter reaches its destination in spite of him, or that the contents of it shall sooner or later reach Colonel Clark—I swear it!"

CHAPTER IV.

LONG & SHORT, DETECTIVES.

"Get up, there, you!"

These words were spoken, and not very gently, by an individual who certainly stood over six feet in his stockings.

He was stalking along behind a burro.

The burro was neatly packed, the pack being secured by a tie which is technically known as a "diamond hitch."

On one side of the pack hung a prospector's pick; on the other side hung a gold pan such as is used in washing out placer gold.

The tall man wore the high, laced boots of a mountaineer, and looked as though he might be a prospector.

"I say, Long!"

This call proceeded, apparently, from the interior of the burro's pack.

"What is it, Short?"

"Is everything clear?"

"Yes."

A flap of canvas dropped suddenly from the side of the burro's pack, and a head was thrust through the aperture.

"It's blamed hot in here, with that hole closed."

"I don't doubt it," returned Long.

"Where are we bound for?"

"Apache City."

"You think the paralytic is there, do you?"

"I know it. He's supposed to be one of Red Cameron's gang—but we have nothing to do with that. After he murdered Jones, in Denver, he flew his kite for Arizona."

"And you're dead sure that the firm of Long & Short, detectives, are going to get him this time?"

"We can't be dead sure of anything in this world, Short, but if we can get to Apache City before Bill Bunker leaves it we'll do our best to gobble him."

Just then the sound of galloping hoofs was heard, and Long turned and looked behind him.

Far in the distance two horsemen could be seen coming along the trail.

They were riding rapidly, and would soon be upon the two detectives.

"Get back into the pack, Short," said Long.

"Keno!"

The flap dropped and Short disappeared.

As the horsemen drew closer, Long saw that one of them carried a mail bag.

"Hello, there!" said the man with the bag, as he and his companion came up with Long and the burro.

"Hello yourself," said Long.

"Why don't you stop!"

"Kase I'm in a hurry."

"What might be your business?"

"It might be sellin' lightnin' rods, but it ain't I'm prospectin'."

"Any luck?"

"Nary."

"Where are you bound for, now?"

"Dunno."

"Then it can't make any particular difference with you whether you're delayed or not. I want you to stop."

"Get up, Ginger! I won't stop."

"Yes, you will! Another move and I'll plug you."

In some way a revolver found its way into the right hand of the man who had carried the mail bag, and Long, rather than have any trouble, stopped his burro.

"When a man asks me to stop in that tone of voice I'll gen'rally accommodate him. What d'ye want?"

"I'll tell you in a minute."

The man with the bag rode close to his companion.

"I say, Jose, here's a chance that I've been waiting for."

"A chance for what?"

"A chance to pay Bunker a visit in Apache City and get out without losing my scalp."

"How will you do it?"

"I'll play the part of our lengthy friend there."

"What will you do with him?"

"Tie him to a tree and leave him for a spell."

"You're running a big risk—but go ahead if you think you can work it successfully."

"I know I can work it. I've got all I want out of this mail bag. You can take it and pitch it into some water hole where it can't be found."

"Where am I to go?"

"To Burke's ranch and wait for me. Burke's is right on the road to the rendezvous."

"All right."

The mail bag changed hands and Red Cameron—for the man who had been carrying it was really the

one who had wrecked the fast mail—rode forward and stopped his horse beside Long.

"You're my prisoner," said he.

"Where's your warrant?" queried Long.

Cameron shook his revolver.

"This is my warrant," he replied.

"Well, that isn't strong enough."

With a wonderful quickness of movement, Long caught Cameron's arm and dragged him from his horse.

As he did so, however, Jose launched a lariat, which flew straight to its mark.

Drawing the rope smartly toward him, Jose managed to hurl the tall detective backward.

In a trice both the outlaws were upon him.

At that instant the flap on the side of the burro's pack dropped, and Short made a motion as though he would get out and hurry to his partner's assistance.

Fortunately, both Cameron and Jose had their backs to the burro and did not discover the peculiar nature of the pack the animal carried.

"Back!" cried Long; "leave me alone."

"Oh, yes, we'll leave you alone!" sarcastically returned Cameron.

Long, however, intended the words for Short.

Short so understood the matter, and, although he could not understand what Long was driving at, he drew himself back and dropped the canvas flap.

Having once gotten the tall detective into their power, it was easy enough for the desperadoes to do with him as they saw fit.

Cameron possessed himself of some of Long's clothes and put the garments on, making a very pronounced change in his appearance.

The detective was bound to a tree and the desperadoes parted.

Jose started for Burke's ranch, with the mutilated mail bag, while Cameron started for Apache City, driving the burro ahead of him, so that his disguise of a prospector might be rendered the more complete.

So Long was tied up short, and Short went along with the outlaw.

Of course, the outlaw knew nothing about Short being present, and Diamond Dick, Jr., was destined, in the near future to be very thankful that this was the case.

CHAPTER V.

RED CAMERON'S MONUMENTAL BLUFF.

Diamond Dick, Jr., together with the other passengers and the trainmen, waited about the scene of the wreck until a relief train could be sent from Tucson.

The conductor of the relief train brought Bertie a message, which ran as follows:

"Get off the train at Apache City. See the notice on the plank wall of the P. O. Watch that notice!"

This message was unsigned.

"Who gave you this?" asked Bertie of the conductor.

"It was handed to me by a boy, just as we were about to pull out of Tucson."

"Do you know who the boy was?"

"Never saw him before."

Bertie was puzzled.

Could this be some trick of his enemies?

Even though it was possible that Red Cameron might be behind the message, Diamond Dick, Jr., resolved to look upon it as a clue and to follow it up.

Leaving the relief train at Apache City, he walked along the one straggling street of the town.

The houses were mostly built of adobe, and from the rafters of each one hung long strings of red peppers, ever dear to the heart of the Mexican.

On a kind of portico which had been built before one of the houses, he saw a pallid-looking man sitting in an armchair.

"Where's the post-office, stranger?" he asked, courteously.

The man in the chair made no reply, and Bertie repeated his question.

A woman suddenly appeared in the doorway.

"Might as well talk to a hitchin' post as ter talk ter him," she said.

"Why?"

"Kase he's deaf an' dumb. 'Sides that, he's paralyzed, an' kain't move neither hand ner fut. But the post-office is right across the street from yere, if ye want to know."

"Much obliged."

Bertie gave the paralytic a curious look and then crossed the street.

The post-office was the only building in town that was constructed entirely of boards.

To one of the boards was attached the following notice:

\$5,000 REWARD!

Inasmuch as the Government has seen fit to offer a reward of \$5,000 for me, and have set Diamond Dick, Jr., on my trail, I hereby offer to any member of my gang a like reward of \$5,000 for the capture, dead or alive, of the youth whose real name is

BERTIE WADE.

This offer is good for three days only, and every day the amount will be raised \$1,000.

RED CAMERON.

"Who put that there?" asked Bertie, of the postmaster, a baldheaded man, who suddenly appeared in the doorway.

"That's hard ter tell, pilgrim. No one seen the chap what done it."

"How long has it been there?"

"Goin' on two days. It was four thousand yest'day. Last night she raised a notch."

"You don't know who changed the figures?"

The postmaster shook his head.

"You are positive they were changed?"

"Yes."

"Do you think the figures will be changed again to-night?"

"Haven't any doubt of it."

"Why don't you watch and see who does it?"

"What good'll that do me, pilgrim?"

"Haven't you any curiosity to know?"

"Not a bit! You bet I'm not goin' to fool with Red Cameron and his gang. The Gov'ment has been tryin' ter git hold of that feller fer years, an' he's too slick for 'em."

Bertie walked inside the post-office and seated himself on a three-legged stool.

In addition to the post-office, the postmaster ran a general store, selling hardware, groceries and clothing, as well as delivering mail.

"Do you live near here?" asked Bertie.

"Jest a few doors down the street."

Bertie looked around cautiously, and then drew nearer the postmaster as he said:

"I don't mind telling you that I am Diamond Dick, Jr., the man for whom Red Cameron has offered that \$5,000 reward."

The postmaster started back with staring eyes.

"What the blazes are ye doin' in this town, then?"

"I came here for reasons of my own. When you

shut up your store to-night I want you to let me remain here."

"What's your game?"

"I'm going to find out who changes the figures on that notice."

"Will you take a word of advice from me?"

"What is it?"

"Don't try any experiments, but get out of this town while ye're able to."

"Is it dangerous for me to stay here?"

"You can gamble that it is."

"Why?"

"'Cause some of Red Cameron's gang live here."

"Do you know who they are?"

"No; they keep mighty shady, but they're here all right enough. Suppose they were to find out that you were in town?"

"I'll take my chances on that," said Bertie, coolly. "Have I your permission to remain here to-night?"

"If ye're bound ter do it, I won't put no obstacles in front of ye."

"Good! I'll go into that rear room there and lay low until you shut up shop. I wouldn't care to have any of the town people see me here—they might ask awkward questions."

"All right, pilgrim; I guess yer head is level on that p'int. Ye'll find a cot back there. Make yerself comfortable."

Bertie went into the little back room and sat down.

He had not been there long when a man entered the post-office.

"Any mail here for Joe Grinder?" he asked.

"Nothin'," answered the postmaster.

"I never git no mail," said Grinder, "but I keep askin' fer some as a matter of principle. Say, d'ye know of any one that wants ter buy the slickest piece of horseflesh in Arizony!"

"No."

"I've got Red Cameron's big black gelding—it's the same hoss Cameron rode fer the past two years—the one as allers kerried him plumb away from the sojers whenever he was hard pressed."

"How did you happen ter git hold of the hoss? Cameron ain't the man ter let sech an animal go fer love ner money."

"The gelding got snagged on a barb-wire fence, an' Cameron thort it had ruined him. It was jest my luck ter happen erlong about that time, an' Cameron

invited me ter dismount an' trade hosses with him. As he used his gun as a persuader, I give up, o' course. But I brought the gelding around, an' he's jest as good as he ever was. Now I want to sell him."

"What's your price?"

Diamond Dick, Jr., stepped out into the front room and asked this question.

Grinder turned upon him like a flash.

"Do you want ter buy him?"

"Certainly, or I shouldn't have asked the question."

"I'll let him go fer a hundred an' fifty, an' he's dirt cheap at that."

"Will that include a saddle, bridle and riata?"

"No; but I kin fix ye up with the extras fer fifty more."

"Is this man all right?" asked Bertie of the postmaster.

"His word is as good as his bond."

Bertie drew a roll of bills from his pocket and counted off two hundred dollars, which he handed to Grinder.

"Get the horse ready for me as soon as possible," said Bertie.

"I'll do that same, pardner," said Grinder, "an' I'll hitch him in the shed right behind this buildin'."

"That will do."

Bertie returned to the rear room and Grinder went away.

Half an hour later the postmaster shut up shop and went off down the street, leaving Bertie behind.

The postmaster had not gone far when a woman stepped across his path and stopped him.

It was the same woman who had directed Diamond Dick, Jr., to the post-office.

"Stop a bit, McAllister," said she.

"What do you want?"

"A word with ye, that's all. What did that young feller with the long hair want?"

"Which young feller?"

"Oh, come off! You know who I mean."

"He wanted his mail."

"What was his name?"

"How do I know that?"

The woman laughed loudly.

"Yer head is mighty soft, McAllister! What name did he give when he asked for his mail?"

The postmaster turned pale.

"I don't remember what name it was."

"Tush! Do ye want Red Cameron ter come down on ye like a thousand o' brick?"

"I'm doing nothin' ter hurt Red Cameron."

"Mebbe ye are by keepin' that name back. Was it Dimun Dick, Jr.'s mail he asked for?"

"Er—I—ye see——"

"Yes or no?" said the woman, fiercely.

"Well, yes, then."

"That's all I wanted to know. Good-night, McAllister."

The woman vanished, and McAllister took his way down the dark street shaking his head forebodingly. Meantime Bertie had not been idle.

He located on the inside of the building the particular plank to which the reward notice was tacked.

He then found a small keyhole saw among the hardware supplies and ripped the plank straight across about five feet from the floor.

The plank would have fallen out, then, had he not nailed on a small cleat by which he could hold it.

Drawing a cracker-box close to the plank, he seated himself upon it and awaited developments.

Hour after hour passed away and Bertie continued to wait patiently in the darkness.

It was certain that whoever came to change the figures in the reward notice must be one of Red Cameron's gang.

Bertie wished to capture this man and force some information from him, if possible.

It was close upon twelve o'clock when Bertie heard a footstep stealthily approaching on the outside.

When the sound of advancing footsteps ceased, our hero felt a slight pressure on the plank, as though some one were at work on the poster attached to its other side.

Now was Bertie's opportunity, and he did not hesitate a moment in taking advantage of it.

Throwing himself against the plank, he pushed it outward with all his strength.

A man was standing outside with a lantern in his hand.

The plank struck him with such force that it hurled him to the ground.

Bertie sprang through the aperture in a jiffy, threw the plank aside, and placed his knee on the man's breast.

The lantern had not been extinguished, but had struck the ground right side up, close to the man's head.

What was Bertie's surprise, upon getting a good look into the man's face, to discover that he was no less a person than the paralytic—the man who couldn't move "hand or fut."

"Le'me go!" cried the fellow, savagely.

"You can talk a little better now than when I spoke to you before," said Bertie, sarcastically. "Got over your paralysis, have you?"

"Le'me go, I say, or I'll kill ye!"

"Don't you get too savage," returned Bertie, "and don't forget that I'm on top, just now, and that I've got use for you——"

Just then, with the howl of an enraged tigress, a woman dashed herself upon Diamond Dick, Jr., with the force of a thunderbolt.

Our hero was thrown from the form of the prostrate man on the ground, and before he could recover himself and do battle with the virago who had attacked him, a number of men came to the woman's assistance, and he was overwhelmed by mere force of numbers.

In less time than it takes to tell it, Bertie was made a prisoner.

"It's Diamond Dick, Jr.," cried the woman, in furious exultation; "we've made five thousand, cold, by this night's work, boys!"

"Hush yer clatter," said one of the men; "here comes somebody."

A little distance down the street could be seen the dark outlines of a burro.

A few feet behind the burro was a man.

Both were rapidly approaching.

When the burro and the man came opposite the group in front of the post-office they stopped.

"If ye've got business anywheres else," said the woman, hoarsely, "don't let us detain ye fer a minit."

"In other words," growled one of the men, "pull yer freight an' do it purty *pronto*. Kin ye sabe that?"

"What's the matter yere?"

"None o' yer business. Are ye goin' ter move along?"

"Not till I git ready."

"Then I'll see that ye git ready purty dern quick."

The man advanced upon the supposed prospector with clenched fists.

The prospector met him considerably more than half way, made a feint with his right hand, stuck

out his foot, and then, with inconceivable rapidity, tripped up his antagonist and sent him rolling along the ground.

The desperado was on his feet in an instant, but the fight had all gone out of him.

"That's onny one man in this kentry that kin do that trick," he cried, "an' that man is Red Cameron —"

"Shut up!" said the supposed prospector, sternly. "Is that you, Bill Bunker?"

"The same! An' ye're the captain or I'm a Dutchman."

"The captain!" echoed the virago, in a transport of maudlin joy; "bless my soul if Cam ain't with us ag'in."

"What's the matter here?" asked Cameron, for the supposed prospector was, indeed, the notorious outlaw.

"We've just captured Dimun Dick, Jr."

"Then you have all done a mighty good night's work. Bring him across the street to the corral."

Red Cameron turned as he spoke, and drove the burro across the road to an enclosure girdled with a high fence.

Opening a gate, the burro passed inside, Cameron followed, and, after him, came the woman and the men, carrying Diamond Dick, Jr., between them.

When they were all inside, the gate was closed and the woman hung the lantern on one of the fence palings.

Bertie was thrown on the ground, close to the fence.

Stepping to his side, Cameron looked down into his face.

"I had an idea, Diamond Dick, Jr.," said he, "that that fall from the freight train had proved the death of you."

"I wasn't born to die that way."

"I see you were not. You're rather a clever fellow, and I should think you would have sense enough to keep out of a deal of this kind. You can't do the Government any good. Men with as much sense and nerve as you have tried the same job that you have undertaken and have failed."

"I shall not fail," was the quiet reply.

"You forget," was the stern reply, "that I am a man of desperate measures. No half-way course satisfies me. You are trying to capture me. Capture, in my case means death. Under the circumstances, I feel obliged to take your life."

Bertie made no answer.

"Every man's hand is against me," went on Cameron, "and I am obliged to resort to extreme measures purely in self-defense."

Taking a handkerchief from his pocket, Cameron twisted it into a rope.

Then he knelt down, passed it between Diamond Dick, Jr.'s jaws and tied the two ends behind his neck.

After that, he turned Bertie over on his face and made some changes in the bonds that secured him.

"There," exclaimed Cameron, with considerable satisfaction, as he arose to his feet, "he's securely bound and gagged. We'll go into the house now, and settle the further details regarding his fate."

When the outlaws passed into the building they left the burro devoting himself to a jag of hay that the woman had thrown to him.

Bertie realized that his situation was a desperate one.

If he could make his situation known to some one outside the high board fence possibly his rescue might be effected.

It was the time of night, however, when there were no travelers along the trail; but, even if there had been, the gag prevented all speech on his part.

As he lay there thinking over his hopeless condition the canvas flap on the side of the burro's pack dropped downward, and a dark, diminutive form fell out of it upon the ground.

Bertie thought he must be dreaming.

But no. The form came toward him. The little man was not over three feet and a half tall, with a big head, broad chest and sturdy legs.

On his hips were two revolvers hanging so that their muzzles reached almost to his knees.

As the dwarf approached he drew a knife from his belt.

"Who are you?" queried Bertie.

"My name's Short," replied the little fellow, deftly running his blade through Bertie's bonds and then removing the gag. "Let's get out of this place before we do any palaverin'. It may be healthier for us."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Bertie.

They noiselessly opened the gate and passed out.

"Follow me," said Bertie, leading the way to the shed in the rear of the post-office.

Our hero was much gratified to find that Cameron's

black gelding, saddled and bridled, was waiting for him.

"Now, then," went on Bertie, "we're safe enough here, for the present, and I wish you'd explain to me how you came to be in that burro's pack."

"Well," returned Short, "you see, I'm a member of the firm of Long & Short, detectives. We came out here looking for a man by the name of Bunker, who's a follower of Red Cameron. We had him located and were on his trail. That pack idea was a notion of Long's. He invented the pack himself, and I was able to lay pretty comfortable in it. Long thought that I might be able to do our cause more good if I was out of sight. We had started for Apache City when we were overtaken by Red Cameron and a man whom he called Jose. They stopped us, had a tussle with Long, tied him to a tree, and then Cameron came on with the burro disguised as a prospector. Of course he didn't know anything about me being in that pack. But it was a lucky thing for you, Diamond Dick, Jr., that I was there."

"It was, indeed."

"This trip has satisfied me of one thing."

"What's that?"

"Why, that Long and I were following a mighty straight tip when we started for Apache City. Bill Bunker's in that house by the corral."

"There's no doubt of that."

"It would take quite a posse of men to arrest him now."

"So it would, and in this town it is hard to tell who are your friends and who are your enemies."

"It's a tough place, if I size it up right."

"What do you intend doing now?"

"My first duty is to go back and cut Long loose from that tree."

"All right; I'll go with you. I'm after Red Cameron, and you fellows are after Bunker. As they will probably be together from now on, our work lies in the same direction."

"Exactly! And if——"

"Hist!"

Bertie laid his hand lightly on Short's shoulder, and they both crouched in the shadow of one of the stalls just as some one entered the shed.

The newcomer stopped abruptly and struck a match against a board.

As the flickering gleam fell on the man's face, Bertie was relieved to find that he was no less a personage than Joe Grinder.

"Hello, Grinder!" said Bertie, in a low voice.

Grinder gave a start of surprise as he turned in the direction from which the voice proceeded.

"Oh, you're there, are ye? I wondered what the blazes was keepin' ye, and came to see if the hoss was here yet."

"Can you get us a couple more horses?"

"With saddles an' bridles?"

"Yes."

"I kin' an' there won't be any discount on the hosses, but the accoutrements may be a little shabby."

"Never mind that. How long before you can get them here?"

"Half an hour."

"Be quick! Don't bring them in along the street in front of the post-office, but fetch them in a back way."

"Keno!"

Grinder was off like a shot.

He was as good as his word, and shortly afterward, Bertie and Short were hurrying back along the trail, leading a horse for Long.

CHAPTER VI.

A DESPERATE CHASE.

As Bertie and his companion passed out of the village he looked anxiously for some trace of Red Cameron or his followers, but he looked in vain.

"It seems as though we were getting away without arousing their suspicions," remarked Short.

Bertie was about to reply, when, with startling suddenness, the rapid hoof beats of horses broke on their ears.

Turning in his saddle, Bertie looked back.

The night was too dark, however, and he could see nothing.

"Don't spare the spur," muttered Bertie; "on for your life, Short!"

"How do you know that the horsemen behind are our enemies?"

As if in answer to this question, a loud voice broke from the darkness behind them:

"Diamond Dick, Jr., is ahead! We'll have him, in spite of fate. Use your quirts!"

It was the voice of Red Cameron.

"What do you think of it now, Short?" queried Bertie, grimly.

"They're after us, all right enough. But there's a

difference between being after us and catching us. Our horses are fresh as daisies."

"Perhaps theirs are, too."

"Of course. You've got a better mount than I have, Diamond Dick, Jr. You could run away from me as easily as a camel could run away from a turtle. Why don't you do it, and save your own scalp?"

"That isn't my style," returned Bertie, indignantly.

"You misunderstand me," said Short, quickly.

"Red Cameron wants your life, but what have I done that he should wish to take mine? If I fall into their hands it will be no very serious matter."

"But the horse I am leading is for your partner, Long. I wouldn't run away from the horse any quicker than I'd run away from you."

Without slackening the speed of his horse in the least, Short bowed his head and listened intently.

"They're gaining on us," said he.

"The hoof beats of their horses sound louder than they did a few moments ago," added Bertie.

"Then there's no doubt but that they'll run us down unless——"

"Unless what?"

"Unless we help ourselves out by some trick. I'd like to propose a scheme."

"Propose it."

"Long and I can ride one horse very comfortably. Suppose we send that led horse galloping on down the trail while we draw up in the bushes.

"They may or may not notice the difference in the volume of sound. I don't think they will. Draw up suddenly, and let the led horse go. What do you say?"

"All right. Draw up—now!"

They both stopped and, as the led horse brushed past, Bertie cut him across the flank with a rawhide quirt.

Snorting with pain, the animal continued on down the road.

Bertie and Short instantly rode into the bushes.

A few moments later the outlaws dashed past.

"We'll be on them in less than five minutes!" cried Cameron.

His men responded with a yell, which grew faint in the distance as they got farther and farther away.

When they were gone Bertie and Short rode out into the trail and started back.

"It worked," chuckled Short.

"Yes; but we had better make the most of our

time because they are liable to tumble to the racket at any minute."

"What had we better do?"

"I think we'd better trot back along the trail for half a mile or such a matter, then make a detour, and proceed in the direction taken by Cameron and his men. We'll be able to breathe our horses and they will be so much the fresher."

"That's a good idea," said Short.

They had not proceeded far, however, when they saw a horseman approaching them.

Was he friend or foe?

The night was so dark they did not see the traveler until he was almost upon them.

All three slightly checked their horses at the unexpected rencontre, and the stranger then drew to one side as though desirous of passing unchallenged.

This Bertie and Short were only too willing to allow him to do. After they had passed each other, six revolver shots rang out on the air, the bullets whistling dangerously close to the ears of Bertie and his companion.

It was the stranger who had shot at them.

"There's a conundrum for you," said Short.

"No conundrum at all," returned Bertie; "he's an outlaw straggler and our trick will be discovered in a few moments if it hasn't been already."

The stranger, immediately after firing, had made good use of his spurs and was now far away.

"Shall we chase him?" asked Short.

"That would be a foolish thing to do," replied Bertie. "It will stand us in hand to double back on the trail without loss of time."

As Diamond Dick, Jr., spoke he whirled his horse's head, left the road, and started back at an angle with their original course.

"I guess we've dodged them," remarked Bertie; "they're after us full-tilt. Listen!"

Short listened for a moment.

"You're right," he said, "but how the deuce did they manage to pass and get around behind us?"

"Give it up. All I know is that that man Cameron is a long-headed rascal. Don't spare your horse, Short. This time it's neck or nothing."

"Blaze away—I'm with you. I'd hate to get nipped on Long's account. He needs us, and needs us bad."

Bending over the saddle with set teeth and compressed lips, Bertie urged his horse forward, keeping the sound of his companion's horse's striking hoofs

constantly in his ears so that he might not leave him too far behind.

Never once did Bertie look back.

Not a word passed between him and Short.

The chase had narrowed down into a desperate trial of horseflesh—nothing less.

Mile after mile rolled away from under the swiftly beating hoofs.

At last Bertie wondered if he could really believe his ears.

Were the sounds of pursuit really dying away?

Such was, indeed, the case!

What could account for the mystery?

Finally, nothing indicative of the pursuit of Red Cameron and his men could be heard.

"We've won, Short," said Bertie, "won, and I'm blessed if I have the slightest idea how!"

As he spoke he drew in his horse and looked around.

He was thrilled with amazement and consternation.

The horse behind was galloping ahead with an empty saddle!

What had become of Short?

Drawing rein, Bertie caught Short's horse by the bridle as it was dashing past.

For a moment he reflected on the strange disappearance of his companion, and then retraced his path for some distance, wondering if Short could have fallen from the horse's back and failed to apprise him of the fact.

Bertie finally settled it in his mind that Short had fallen far enough behind so that their enemies were able to use a riata and pull him out of the saddle.

"Nevertheless," thought Bertie, "Short may be all right, but I know Long's in trouble. I'll find him and set him free, and then we can go on a hunt for Short."

Bertie had not much difficulty in finding the spot where the two detectives had met the men with the mail bag, as the little detective had given a minute description of the place.

"Hello, Long!" cried Bertie, when he thought he was near the spot.

"Hello!" came a faint response.

Guided by the sound, Bertie had no trouble in going at once to the detective's assistance.

"Who are you?" queried Long, as Bertie released him from the tree.

"A friend of yours," returned our hero. "People call me Diamond Dick, Jr."

"How did you learn of my situation?"

"Through your partner, Short."

"He got out of that mess with his scalp, did he?"

"Yes, and saved my scalp in the operation."

Bertie thereupon briefly related what had occurred.

"What do you think became of Short?" he asked, when he had finished his story.

"That's hard to tell. I incline to the belief that he's in the hands of Red Cameron and his gang, although I don't know why they should take extreme measures against him, unless they connect him in some way with your escape."

"That's exactly what I'm afraid they'll do."

"Where do you think Cameron has gone?"

"To his rendezvous, probably."

"Where is that?"

"That is something a great many men would give a good deal to know. Several about whom I have heard have tried to find the place and failed—losing their lives in the attempt. But I think I can solve the riddle."

"How?"

"The horse I am riding is Cameron's black gelding, an animal which was long in his possession. It is more than probable that the horse has been to his rendezvous scores of times. Perhaps if I give him his head he will lead us directly to the place."

"It's worth trying."

"Very well; suppose we try it without delay. This is Short's horse, but it will stand you in good stead now—or do you feel as though you wanted to rest after your severe treatment?"

"Not much! A nip of red-eye is all I need."

Drawing a flask from his pocket, Long took a big swallow of its contents and then mounted Short's horse, and Bertie allowed the reins to drop on the black gelding's neck, giving him his head.

For a short time the horse moved uneasily about, then headed in a certain direction and held firmly to the path.

"He's taking us there," said Bertie.

"No doubt of it," replied Long.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PAINTED HILL.

Cameron's black gelding was possessed of almost human intelligence.

Diamond Dick, Jr., did not urge the horse, but it

kept on its way, swerving neither to the right nor to the left.

This was not the first time a dumb brute had been used in this manner.

In fact, the remembrance of a similar case in a murder mystery had suggested to Bertie the fact that he make such a trial.

Hours passed away, and still the horse was going.

The two riders were now in the fastnesses of the Sierra Catalinas, where common report had long ago laid the outlaws' stamping ground.

"How much longer is that gelding going to keep this thing up?" queried Long, who, unused to long rides as Bertie was, was getting somewhat saddle-weary.

"We'll follow him through to the end," said Bertie.

They proceeded but a short distance after this when the gelding came to an abrupt stop in a narrow, rocky gulch at the base of a hill.

"What's the meaning of this?" asked the detective, disgustingly.

"It must mean that we have arrived at the rendezvous," replied Bertie.

"Rendezvous nothing! Outlaws as shrewd as Red Cameron don't rendezvous in a place like this."

"Well, we have a poor chance in this dark cut, but let's explore a little. There may be a few things connected with the place which we don't understand, and it's entirely possible that we don't see all there is to be seen looking over the ground as we are now."

"That may be so, too," returned the detective, as they both dismounted.

Bertie went around the hill and Long started over it.

The hill was of a peculiar shape—in fact, it seemed like nothing else in nature which Bertie had ever seen before.

While remarking upon the strange formation of the hill, Bertie's attention was suddenly called to Long, who was acting in a peculiar manner.

He was flourishing his arms and motioning toward the horses.

"What's the matter?" cried Bertie.

Long instantly laid his finger on his lips and motioned toward the horses again.

Bertie believed he understood the pantomime.

Long wanted him to ride away—but why?

A moment later, with a sound like the rending of

heavy canvas, the detective disappeared from sight, apparently dropping directly through the ground.

Bertie was nonplused for a moment, and then he realized that the hill, which looked like solid earth, was really constructed of canvas, painted, and had sand and bowlders scattered about and over it in order to make it look more natural.

This was exactly what the outlaws' rendezvous consisted of.

Originally the canvas structure had formed the background for a wild west show. Red Cameron had secured it, recognized its advantages in the construction of a rendezvous, and had built a hiding-place which had baffled scouts and detectives for many months.

Believing that Long might have some special object in view in desiring his absence, Bertie returned to the spot where he had left his horse, mounted and started down the gulch.

The lower end of the gulch was thickly grown with greasewood and mesquite.

As Bertie started through the undergrowth he heard voices, evidently advancing toward him.

Riding his horse into the brush, he waited.

In a few moments Bill Bunker and Jose came riding along the trail.

"Cameron is playing a dare-devil game," said Jose.

"At the fort, eh?" returned Bunker.

"Yes. Wait a minute, Bunker."

"What's up?"

"I've got to tighten these saddle cinches."

Jose dismounted, threw one of the tapideroes over the horse's back and began drawing up the cinches.

"What's he going to do?" asked Bunker.

"Why," returned Jose, with a laugh, "he's going to marry the colonel's daughter. What do you think of that for a ten-strike? After that is over, have you any idea that the colonel will continue to hunt down his son-in-law as zealously as he has been doing?"

"I don't know what the upshot will be. What does Cameron think about it?"

"Why, he thinks he's feathering his nest in great shape. In fact, I believe he has hopes of a Government pardon if he can carry the scheme through."

"Bosh! The mere fact that he's the colonel's son-in-law won't save his neck. He's too badly wanted."

"That's just my way of thinking. Cameron is in a hurry to do the job."

"Why?"

"Well, the old man hasn't been exactly himself since he found out that the Government had turned Diamond Dick, Jr., loose on his trail."

"Diamond Dick, Jr., is only a kid!"

"Perhaps so; but he gave you fellows the slip in great shape last night."

"Some one helped him out of that scrape."

"There's no doubt in the world about that. The old man is afraid Diamond Dick, Jr., will discover that the notorious outlaw, Red Cameron, and the Eastern capitalist, Henry Gordon, are one and the same. If he should, and if the old colonel got hold of it, the devil would be to pay, and no mistake. Cameron thinks he had better marry the girl while he can. The ceremony takes place at the fort at three this afternoon."

"Will Cameron spend his honeymoon at the rendezvous?" queried Bunker, with a chuckle.

"Hardly. If he isn't careful, he'll spend it in the guardhouse at the fort."

Jose finished tightening his cinches, and then thrust his hand into his pocket and drew out a pipe and some tobacco.

"If I'm not mistaken," went on Jose, "Cameron expects to have trouble."

"What are we to do?"

"We're to go to the rendezvous, get fresh horses, and return so that we may be of assistance, if needed."

"It's a bad scheme to bring the gang so close to the soldiers," muttered Bunker, shaking his head forebodingly.

Jose laughed.

"There are only a few soldiers at the fort," said he. "Cameron has worked a mighty slick trick just to get rid of them at this particular time. Trust the old man. He's long-headed."

With these words, Jose sprang into the saddle and started off at a brisk pace.

When the two outlaws had vanished from sight, Diamond Dick, Jr., rode out into the trail.

He could hardly believe that Red Cameron would dare attempt to play so bold a game.

Our hero was obliged, however, to give the outlaw the benefit of the doubt.

The marriage was to take place at three o'clock!

Bertie must prevent it.

In fact, this would be a favorable opportunity for capturing the outlaw.

But could he reach Fort McPherson by three o'clock with a horse that was almost worn out?

He would have to try, at any rate, and he immediately turned his horse's head in the direction of the fort.

He would have given a great deal to know what had become of Long, before leaving the vicinity of the rendezvous, but he consoled himself with the reflection that the detective was abundantly able to take care of himself.

CHAPTER VIII.

BERTIE'S RACE AGAINST TIME.

The black gelding had mettle and bottom in proportion to his intelligence.

He struck into a rapid pace and, despite the work he had recently accomplished, did not once lag during Bertie's race against time.

As our hero drew near the fort, he saw that the post had taken on an air of festivity. There was a great display of bunting and evergreens and the walk up to the door of the gymnasium building was bordered with flowers.

"Am I too late?" was the question Bertie asked himself as he dashed up to the door of the gymnasium and threw himself from his horse's back.

The building was comfortably filled with people, and before a platform where the minister was standing going through with the marriage ceremony, stood a young woman, evidently the colonel's daughter, side by side with Red Cameron.

One of the hardest things Bertie ever felt called upon to do was to interrupt that marriage ceremony.

Still, justice for all concerned called aloud upon him for immediate action.

Hastily removing his hat, he rushed into the building, his spurs jingling discordantly at every step.

His sudden entrance chained the attention of all.

Even the minister paused and looked toward him.

As Red Cameron's eyes rested upon the youth an ashen color overspread his face, and he staggered slightly.

He quickly recovered himself, however, and a dangerous light gleamed in his eyes.

"This ceremony must stop!" cried Bertie.

A hush as of death fell over the assembled people.

At last Colonel Clark, white with anger, arose to his feet.

"What do you mean, sir," he thundered, "by interrupting this ceremony?"

"Your daughter is about to be married to that notorious bandit, Red Cameron," returned Bertie, scarcely relishing the tone of voice in which the colonel addressed him.

"What?" returned the colonel.

"That man, yonder," went on Bertie, sternly, "is the outlaw, Red Cameron. When we parted, I told you I would have the pleasure of delivering him into your hands when next we met. He is a thief, a train-wrecker, and a double-dyed murderer."

Bertie's voice rang out in clarion-like tones.

Dismay, stupefaction and bewilderment were written on the faces of all present.

"There must be some mistake," said the colonel.

"This gentleman is Henry Gordon."

"There is no mistake," returned Bertie. "If you are as eager to rid the country of Cameron as you profess to be, you will take that man into custody at once."

Cameron had been standing a supine listener to all this.

Suddenly, however, he leaped toward Diamond Dick, Jr., with a wild shout upon his lips.

Before any one could intervene he had attacked the youth.

Bertie met him coolly.

For a brief space he contented himself with merely warding the outlaw's blows, but when he discovered that his antagonist had a knife up his sleeve he quickly and quietly knocked him down.

When Cameron struggled to his feet he was surrounded by his friends who led him back toward the platform.

The colonel immediately confronted Bertie.

"What a disgrace!" muttered the old soldier, "what a scandal! Diamond Dick, Jr., you have made a terrible mistake."

"I have made no mistake whatever," returned Bertie, who was beginning to get out of patience.

The colonel was about to reply when his orderly entered and handed him a note.

The officer read it, pulled at his gray mustache, and started for the door.

"Follow me!" he said, curtly, to Diamond Dick, Jr.

Leaving the gymnasium, they crossed the parade ground and entered the colonel's office.

They were met at the door by no less a personage than—

Gillsey!

"What!" cried Bertie, in amazement. "Is it possible that you are alive, Mr. Gillsey?"

Gillsey smiled faintly.

He was very pale and carried his right arm in a sling.

"Yes," he answered; "that bridge did not prove the death of me, after all. Red Cameron was foiled, although he has thought ever since that I was dead."

"What are you men talking about?" queried the colonel, mystified. "I am glad to see you, Gillsey, but why have you summoned me from my daughter's marriage ceremony?"

"Simply to save your daughter," replied Gillsey, sternly. "Did Diamond Dick, Jr., succeed in stopping the ceremony?"

"Yes; and he also succeeded in creating such a scandal as was never before heard of at the post."

"Better a scandal than that your daughter's happiness should be ruined."

"You do not also mean to tell me that Red Cameron and Henry Gordon are one and the same?"

"That's exactly what I mean to tell you."

"Then you are both crazy. I won't believe a word of it."

The colonel began walking the floor of his office with angry strides.

"See here, Colonel Clark," said Gillsey, "I am not a man who would deliberately lie to you."

"Why didn't you answer my letter asking you about Cameron? You might have averted this scandal, if you had."

"I did write the letter."

"Where is it, then?"

"Red Cameron, or Henry Gordon, as you know him, wrecked the mail train for the sole purpose of securing that letter. He was successful, and the letter is now destroyed."

"I can't believe it!"

"In some way he found out that you had written me a letter of inquiry. I saw him in Tucson, posing as Henry Gordon. He threatened me, and I found out, by a lieutenant who happened to be in town, and who was on duty at this post, that he was engaged to marry your daughter. This decided me to go to the fort and see you personally. I started on a freight train because I knew that every passenger train was being watched for my departure. Unfortunately, Gordon discovered me. He boarded the

freight and tried to kill me. Diamond Dick, Jr., saved my life. The struggle occurred on top of one of the freight cars, and when Diamond Dick, Jr., came to my rescue, I rose to my feet just in time to get struck from the train by the overhead beams of a bridge. I had a terrible fall, and it is a miracle that I escaped with a whole bone in my body. I can only lay my escape to my fall in the water. When I recovered consciousness, I found myself lying among some flags growing along the edge of the stream. My arm was broken and I was nearly played out. I managed to drag myself along to the next town, however, and secured a doctor's aid in setting my broken arm. Since then I have been watching the drift of events, and getting ready to make this declaration as soon as it should become necessary.

"Colonel Clark, Henry Gordon is none other than Red Cameron. Diamond Dick, Jr., has informed you correctly."

There was silence for a moment, and then Bertie asked:

"Was it you, Mr. Gillsey, who sent me that message by the conductor of the relief train?"

"Yes. I knew, if you went to Apache City, that you would very shortly locate the rendezvous of Red Cameron's gang."

Gillsey turned to the colonel.

"Clark," he went on, "your duty is clear. Cameron is in your power—you must arrest him at once."

"It will break my daughter's heart," muttered the old warrior, in perplexity.

"Nonsense!"

Colonel Clark rubbed his brow for a moment and then turned to Bertie.

"Diamond Dick, Jr., what did you want all those soldiers for?"

"What soldiers?"

"Why, the ones I have been sending out to Powder River. They went by your request."

"I don't understand you," returned Bertie.

"Perhaps you will understand this, then."

The colonel handed to the youth a written note.

Bertie read it.

It ran as follows:

"Colonel Clark: Please send at once, under a competent officer, all the soldiers you can spare. Let them bivouac at Powder River, where the stream is crossed by the Apache trail. I have Red Cameron

and his gang dead to rights. With the help of the soldiers I can capture the entire outfit.

"DIAMOND DICK, JR."

"Where did you get this?" asked Bertie.

"It was sent to me this morning."

"I never wrote it."

"What?"

"It is a forgery. I never saw that note before."

"But who could forge it?"

"Who but Red Cameron."

"What object could he have had?"

"He might have wanted to reduce the number of soldiers in the fort, and let me tell you valuable time is being wasted here—that man will not be taken easily."

Just then the door was thrown open and the orderly rushed in.

"A terrible thing has happened, colonel!" cried the soldier, almost forgetting in his excitement, to give the salute.

"What is it? Speak, man!"

"Gordon sprang on his horse with your daughter in his arms, and dashed out through the big gate. Several tried to follow him, but a dozen desperate-looking men rode out of the chaparral and joined him."

"How long ago did this happen?" cried the colonel, wildly.

"It just happened."

"Tell Stannard to put every available soldier in the saddle! Bring up my horse! Move, man, move!"

"A horse for me!" broke in Gillsey.

"Yes—an extra horse, orderly. Off with you. By the eternal, I'll see this thing through to the bitter end."

Opening a drawer in his desk, the colonel took out a brace of army Colts and thrust them into his pockets.

Meantime Diamond Dick, Jr., had bounded out of the office and had brought his horse to the door.

In less time than it takes to tell it, a dozen troopers were in the saddle.

"Where will Cameron probably go?" asked the colonel, his eyes flashing with the anger that burned within him.

"To his rendezvous, most likely," said Gillsey.

"Where's that?"

"I know," said Bertie.

"Then we'll follow you."

"This way."

"Forward!" cried the colonel.

Away they dashed at a swinging gallop.

CHAPTER IX.

HOT TIMES AT THE RENDEZVOUS.

"Isn't it possible that Red Cameron might retreat to some other place besides his rendezvous?" asked the colonel.

"Certainly it is," replied Bertie.

"Then why should we keep bowling along on this course when we may be going altogether wrong?"

"It's the only course we have to follow, and we've got to take chances that it's the right one."

"What I want to do is to get my daughter out of that scoundrel's hands as soon as possible, and I'd feel better if I knew that we were headed right."

"The only thing we can do," said Gillsey, "is to go ahead exactly as we have started."

For some time they rode on.

"Who is that ahead on the trail yonder?" Gillsey finally asked.

"I've had my eyes on that object for some time," said Bertie. "It is a Chinaman on a mule."

"He's coming this way," said the colonel.

"Yes; and when we arrive opposite him, I want you to halt the troopers," said Bertie.

"Why? We don't want to lose any time."

"We won't lose much time, and it may prove a benefit to us in the end."

"I can't understand you," said the colonel, "but I'll halt the men if you say so."

A moment later they were opposite the Chinaman and the colonel halted his party.

Bertie rode up to the Chinaman, looking him squarely in the eyes.

"Howdy, John?"

"Me feel velly good. You soldiers, hey?"

"Some of us. Where are you bound for?"

"Bound for 'Pache City. Cook for cattlemen, allee samee."

"Where do you come from?"

"Me been diggin' gold by Rich Hill. You know um?"

For answer Bertie threw himself from his saddle upon the Chinaman and hurled him backward from his mule upon the hard ground.

An instant later he had pulled off the supposed Chinaman's pigtail and rubbed some of the paint from his face.

"Ah, ha, Mr. Bill Bunker," said Bertie, "your little scheme didn't work. Take it easy—don't struggle. I've got you for good."

"Who is it?" asked the colonel.

"One of Cameron's gang. He was probably sent back to spy on us and find out what we intended doing."

"Tie him to one of the troopers," growled the colonel.

"Wait," said Bertie.

Drawing a revolver, Bertie placed it at Bunker's temple.

"Have I your permission to kill this man, colonel, if he doesn't answer the question I am going to ask him?"

"What are you going to ask him?"

"Where Red Cameron took your daughter."

"Kill him if he doesn't answer that question truthfully."

"You hear, Bunker?"

"I ain't deaf," was the surly answer.

"What are you going to say?"

Bunker preserved a dogged silence.

"Once," said Bertie. "I am going to ask you three times, and if you don't answer you will have to stand the consequences."

No word from Bunker.

"Twice," said Bertie.

Bunker looked up into the youth's eyes.

He saw no mercy there.

He looked around him into the faces of the others present, but could gather no encouragement.

"Cameron took her to the rendezvous."

Bunker spoke the words hurriedly as though anxious to have the ordeal over with.

"Good!" growled the colonel. "Tie him to Goodwin."

Goodwin was the biggest trooper at the post.

He was a veritable Hercules, and Bunker looked like a pigmy when bound at his back.

This incident over, Bertie took up the lead and continued on toward the Painted Hill.

In due time they reached the gorge and our hero reined in his horse at the rendezvous.

No signs of life were to be seen about the Painted Hill; no sound indicative of the presence of the outlaws was to be heard.

"Is this the rendezvous?" asked the colonel.

"Yes," said Bertie; "that hill in front of us."

"Then there's no one here, and that man you captured lied."

"The rendezvous is under the hill."

"Under it? Impossible!"

"No, not impossible. That hill is made of painted canvas."

Exclamations of surprise went up from every one in the party.

"Then we can't ride over it," said the colonel.

"No; our horses would get tangled up, and we would fall easy prey to Cameron and his men."

"What's to be done? If my daughter is in that hole I shall rescue her in spite of fate."

"Let your troopers draw their sabres, charge the hill, and cut their way through it."

"That's right!" cried the colonel; "revolver in one hand and sword in the other."

Facing his men, he gave the necessary orders, and they started at a run for the hill.

They had not covered half the distance that separated them from the rendezvous when a large board was thrust up out of the hill.

The board bore these words:

"Stop! Withdraw your forces or the colonel's daughter will be killed!"

"Halt!" shouted the colonel, his face pale as death. "Do you suppose the dastards would be guilty of such a deed?"

"Red Cameron would halt at nothing!" declared Gillsey.

"I don't believe my daughter is there at all," said the colonel, after reflecting a few moments. "Ready, men! We'll charge the hill at any hazard!"

A faint cheer went up from the soldiers.

Before they could start, however, the colonel had raised his hand restrainingly.

Above the rock where the board had appeared Red Cameron was now to be seen.

In front of him he held the colonel's daughter.

Hot words fell from the colonel's lips.

In fact, he seemed almost crazy with rage, and was certainly on the point of doing something desperate when Red Cameron shouted:

"Colonel Clark, seeing is believing! This will convince you that your daughter is really in my power. Unless you withdraw your men and return at once to the fort, your daughter will be killed."

"You cur! you cowardly hound!" shouted the colonel, "you dare not raise your hand against her!"

"Attempt to attack this stronghold of mine and see!"

The colonel was placed in a terrible position.

While he did not for a moment believe that Cameron would carry out his wild threat, yet he certainly could not run the risk of making a charge.

While he was biting his gray mustache in perplexity, Cameron disappeared within the hill with the girl.

"What's to be done, Diamond Dick, Jr.?"

Before Bertie could answer an arrow came flying through the air from the direction of the hill, struck a rock at his feet and splintered to pieces.

Close about the shaft was bound a scrap of paper.

This did not escape Bertie's sharp eye, and he stooped and picked it up.

The scrap proved to be a note, which read thus:

"Diamond Dick, Jr.: We have taken care of the colonel's daughter so that she can't be killed. Charge the hill. We will help you out."

"LONG & SHORT."

"What is that?" asked the colonel.

Bertie read the note to him.

"Who are these men, Long & Short?"

"They're detectives."

"How did they come to get inside the outlaw's rendezvous?"

"Long came with me on my first visit. I don't know how Short managed to get in."

"Can they be depended on?"

"Yes."

"Then we'll attack the place in spite of fate!"

CHAPTER X.

GOOD WORK BY THE DETECTIVES.

When Short disappeared so mysteriously from Bertie's side during their pursuit by Red Cameron and his men, he had not, as Bertie was inclined to think, been lassoed and jerked from his saddle.

On the contrary, Short had formulated a clever plan, and his disappearance was but an incident in the working of it.

Short knew that Bertie would never ride on and abandon him.

As Short's horse was slow, the inevitable result

would be that both he and Bertie would be run down and captured.

Dangling from the bow of the detective's saddle was a riata.

Removing this and holding it in his hand, he dropped from the horse's back just as they were speeding along through a chaparral.

On either side of the trail, almost directly opposite each other, was a stout mesquite tree.

Short was tumbled over the ground rather roughly, when he dropped from the saddle, but though he was little, he was tough, and he picked himself up none the worse for the experience.

Running to one of the mesquite trees, he made an end of the riata fast to it; then, springing across the trail, he made the other end fast to the second tree.

Hardly was this accomplished when the pursuers came along in a body.

The two who were riding ahead got tangled up in the riata and their horses went sprawling over the ground; every one of those who followed fared in a similar manner, and, as a result, every one of the outlaws, together with their horses were down in an indiscriminate heap.

After some fifteen minutes of cursing and grumbling, the desperadoes managed to extricate themselves from their dilemma.

All the horses were recovered save one, and that was nowhere to be found.

"You'll have to ride with Bender, Timmons," said Cameron.

"Are we going to keep up the chase?" asked Bender.

"The deuce, no! What good would it do? Diamond Dick, Jr., has had fifteen minutes the start of us, and we couldn't overtake him if we had wings. Blast the luck!"

"What'll we do?"

"Two of you go to the rendezvous. The rest can wait for me at Apache City. I'll send Jose and Bunker out to the Catalinas to-morrow."

Without another word, Red Cameron vanished in the darkness.

Two of his men started for the rendezvous, and the rest for Apache City.

The two men were followed by Short, who was mounted on the horse that the outlaws had lost.

He followed the desperadoes noiselessly, and managed to keep them well within sight, despite the darkness of the night.

He was going to the rendezvous because he had overheard Cameron say that he would send Bunker out there the following morning—and Bill Bunker was the man that both Long and Short were after.

By sunrise the rendezvous was reached, and Short paused among the greasewood bushes, and saw the two men he was shadowing disappear within the Painted Hill in a manner that seemed little short of marvelous.

How had they managed to do it?

Leaving his horse, Short skirted the hill for a short distance and then began to surmount it.

As he was light, the canvas structure, rotted though it was with paint, managed to uphold him for some distance; but finally it gave way beneath his feet and he dropped downward and landed on the hard earth.

It was then that he discovered the nature of the Painted Hill, and he gave a low whistle as he sat up and rubbed his shins.

It was rather dark where he was, but, some distance away, he saw a dimly burning light.

He advanced closer to the light and found that the two men he had followed were sitting around it.

The rendezvous, originally, seemed to have been a level plain covered with boulders that increased in size toward the back of the gulch.

Over these boulders the canvas had been spread, the rocks keeping it up and giving it the character of a hill.

As Short wandered around in the endeavor to find out as much as he possibly could about the place, he came upon a room walled in with boulders.

The floor of this room was covered with bearskins, and two or three comfortable chairs were scattered about. Attached to the rocky wall was a long Indian bow and a quiver of arrows.

A couple of Winchesters and a brace of derringers hung from the opposite wall.

"This must be where the High Mucky Muck hangs out," thought Short; and then, as he was tired out, he curled up under one of the bearskins, and—went to sleep!

The detective did not sleep very long, but what rest he got did him an immense amount of good.

Getting up, he continued his explorations

Creeping on his hands and knees, and proceeding as stealthily as possible for fear of arousing the suspicions of the two men, he passed from one boulder

to another, and finally came to a place that was evidently used as a storehouse.

Sitting in even rows close to the base of the rocks were a number of cans.

Uncorking them, he applied his nostrils to the orifice of each one and found them to be filled with benzine and kerosene.

There were also boxes of cartridges, kegs of powder, barrels of flour, boxes of smoked meat, and other supplies.

While Short was pursuing his investigation he was suddenly hailed by a low voice from above:

"Short, or I'm a digger! What are you doing there?"

Short looked up in consternation.

It was Long.

"Hush! Talk in a whisper. What are you doing up there?"

"I came on here with Diamond Dick, Jr."

"Where is Diamond Dick, Jr., now?"

"Walking around this hill. We're exploring the place."

"Well, stop your exploring and tell Diamond Dick, Jr., if you can without making any noise, to pull out."

"Why?"

"We're after Bunker, ain't we?"

"Of course."

"Well, we can catch him if there ain't too many of us. Tell Diamond Dick, Jr., to pull out and leave us to work this racket."

We have already seen how Long induced Diamond Dick, Jr., to leave the vicinity of the Painted Hill.

Having finished his pantomime, Long turned, made a misstep, and came tearing through the canvas, dropping down beside his partner.

"Silence, on your life!" hissed Short.

For a moment they waited and listened.

Long had not been heard.

"That's luck," muttered Short.

"Is there any one here besides ourselves?"

"Yes; two of the outlaws are here."

"How did you come to give Diamond Dick, Jr., the slip and get into this place?"

"That's too long a story to tell, now. I've got something else on my mind."

"What are you thinking about?"

"Destroying this rendezvous."

"What for?"

"It's a viper's nest and ought to be wiped out on general principles."

"I agree with you there, but how do you propose to do it?"

"See those tin cans?"

"Yes."

"Well, they're full of benzine and coal oil. This roof is made of canvas, and we'll just soak it with the contents of those cans."

"Can we do it without being caught?"

"I believe so. We can do that while we're waiting for Bunker."

"Is he coming here?"

"Yes; some time to-day. We want to lay for that fellow and nab him."

"We'll do it."

"If we get close pressed we'll fire the rendezvous and perhaps it will help us out."

"Good! This is a mighty queer place, ain't it?"

"Red Cameron is a queer fellow. He's a rascal, but he's a clever one. No wonder the officers have never been able to locate his hangout."

Taking the cans, one at a time, the detectives began persistently to distribute the inflammable liquid over the uneven canvas roof.

In order to do this they would mount a boulder or something else that would bring them near the roof, cut a hole in the canvas and pour the contents of the cans on from the outside.

In this way the liquid ran over the cloth and saturated it thoroughly.

From place to place they proceeded, working in this way, and it was almost sunset when they had emptied all the cans and finished their labors.

"There's no sign of Bunker," said Long, dropping wearily down on the ground. "Why do you suppose he hasn't shown up?"

The words had hardly been uttered when the beat of horses' hoofs was heard on the rocks of the gulch.

Long got up and peered out through a rent in the canvas.

"Thunder and blazes!" he exclaimed.

"What do you see?" asked his partner.

"Here they come—Red Cameron and about a dozen of his men. He's got a girl in front of him on his horse. What do you think that means?"

"Don't know. Is Bunker there?"

"Not a sign of Bunker."

"I wonder if they left that fellow in Apache City?"

"Give it up. But I can tell you one thing we have got to do."

"What's that?"

"Either hunt our holes or get scalped."

"That's so. Come this way, Long."

They crept back in the direction of Cameron's quarters and among the high rocks beyond.

They had hardly stowed themselves away there when the outlaws came into the rendezvous.

Jose and Cameron, bringing the colonel's daughter between them, made their way into Cameron's room.

"Do you think they'll follow us, Jose?" asked Cameron.

"I don't hardly see how they can. No one knows where this place is. Several have tried to find it out, but you know the result."

Cameron's brow was knitted into a frown.

It was plainly to be seen that he was worried.

"That infernal Diamond Dick, Jr., may know more than I give him credit for. He's foxy and sharper than a steel trap."

"We sent Bunker back, you know, to see what they intended doing."

"Bunker ought to be back here soon. Hist! what's that?"

The two detectives were not so far away but that they could overhear this conversation between the two outlaws.

Before Jose could answer Cameron, one of the other outlaws came running in.

"The soldiers are coming up the gulch," he cried.

"How many?"

"A dozen—led by the colonel in command of the fort."

"My father!" spoke up the colonel's daughter, tearfully. "Oh, let me go to him! Let me—"

"Shut up!" cried Cameron.

Then he turned to the messenger again.

"Any one else with them besides the soldiers?"

"Diamond Dick, Jr., and Gillsey!"

"A thousand fiends! Even the dead come back to attack me! Gillsey! Any one else?"

"Bunker is a prisoner."

"By Heaven! if I thought Bunker had guided those fellows here I'd cut his heart out! What are they going to do?"

"They look as though they were getting ready to attack us—they have drawn their sabres."

Fire flashed in Cameron's eyes.

What should he do to defend himself?

He glared about the room.

As his eyes rested on the colonel's daughter he had an idea.

"Bring me the top of the mess table."

This strange desire was instantly complied with.

On the smooth side of the table Cameron wrote, with a piece of crayon, in large letters, the message that the colonel's daughter would be killed unless the troops were withdrawn.

He then hurried out among the rocks and mounted a boulder within three feet of the spot where the detectives were crouching.

We have already seen what effect this had on the attacking party.

An instant after this Cameron leaped from the rock and returned to his room.

"Jose," he said, hoarsely, "I feel as though I held the whip hand in this business, but go and see that the men are in shape to fight."

"What are you going to do with the girl?"

"Show her to her father. He may have some doubts of her being here."

Lifting the colonel's daughter, Cameron carried her in his arms back to the place where he had before mounted the boulder.

This time he ascended, dragging the girl after him.

"By thunder," said Short, "I can't stand this."

"Nor I, either," said Long.

"Can't we save that girl?"

"I think so."

"I tell you, Long—when he comes down he'll have his hands full and his back will be toward you. Hit him a clip on the back of the head with your revolver."

"I'll do it. But where are you going?"

"I'm going to appropriate a couple of Winchesters and a brace or derringers. I wish, also, to borrow a bow and arrow for a few moments."

"Bow and arrow! What the dickens can you do with them?"

"Wait—I'll show you."

When Short came back, he found Long standing over the body of Red Cameron and the girl lying in a faint at the detective's side.

"Here's a pretty kettle of fish," grumbled Long.

"The woman has fainted and I haven't a thing to tie Cameron with."

"Hold your horses a minute. I'll give you something for that."

Leaping to the top of the boulder with the agility of a monkey, the little detective shot an arrow toward the attacking party and then dropped back under the canvas.

"What did you do that for?" asked Long. "Are you trying to pick off Bunker?"

"I shot a note to Diamond Dick, Jr., telling him to make the attack on the rendezvous, and that we'd take care of the girl."

"Good! Your body is short, but your head is long."

"Much obliged, but this is our busy day, and we can't swap compliments."

Short then deftly unstrung the bow and tossed the string to Long.

"There—a buckskin thong. You could hang ten men with it. Get it about the wrist of the outlaw. See if you can do that as quickly as I wrote that note to Diamond Dick, Jr."

While Long knelt over the prostrate and insensible outlaw, Short forced a swallow of liquor between the lips of the colonel's daughter and did everything in his power to bring her to her senses.

"Drop that!"

The detectives looked up suddenly and saw Jose with a revolver in each hand, drawing a bead on them, his eyes glittering like those of a lynx.

"Get out of here, confound you!" growled Long.

"I'm not here for that purpose," was the cool reply. "Throw up your hands or I'll put a bullet through you both."

Quick as a tiger cat, Short launched himself through the air, straight at the outlaw's throat.

Crack!

Had the outlaw not been compelled to fire at Short with his left hand, his aim would undoubtedly have been better.

As it was, his bullet merely clipped a button from the little detective's coat, but did no further damage. The shot had attracted the attention of the other outlaws, however, and as Short bore the outlaw backward to the floor with the impetus of his leap, they heard loud shouts as the rest of Red Cameron's men advanced toward them.

"Fire the canvas! Fire the canvas!" cried Short. "It's our only hope. Quick!"

Scratching a match on the boulder Long applied it to the cloth, which blazed up like tinder.

As the long, yellow tongues of flame swept toward the oncoming outlaws, they gave vent to wild yells of dismay.

Just then, from outside, came a clatter of bullets, a rattle of sabres and hoarse shouts of the soldiers.

"Pick up the girl, Long," screamed Short, in a voice that could be heard high above the tumult; "run! run for your life!"

CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUSION.

Without the rendezvous a somewhat different but almost as exciting a scene was being enacted.

As soon as the colonel was convinced that his daughter would not be hurt if he took the initiative and ordered a charge, he gave the word, and his troopers galloped against the canvas walls of the Painted Hill.

A few of the outlaws tried to pass them.

These were struck down with the horses' hoofs and easily captured.

Suddenly, in the midst of the wild attack, a sea of flame shot into the air and came rushing toward them.

"We will have to draw back," suggested Bertie; "the troopers will be roasted to death. Have them dismount and drag away the outlaws who are unable to help themselves."

"But my daughter," shouted the colonel, fiercely; "I want to find the red-handed villain that abducted her. Suppose she should be in that vortex of flame —"

"But she is not."

"How do you know?"

"I see her being carried this way."

"By whom? Red Cameron? 'Fore the Lord, I'll settle with that fellow."

With a wild shout, the colonel struck spurs to his horse, and Bertie followed just in time to prevent the irate old man from impaling Long on the point of his sword.

"Why do you stop me, sir?" thundered the colonel.

"Simply to prevent you from killing one of your friends."

"How do you know he is my friend?"

"His name is Long. He saved your daughter from the hands of Red Cameron."

"You're right, and I'm an old fool! I beg your pardon. Grace, my child!"

The girl sprang to the old warrior's arms with a cry of joy.

Leaving them thus affectionately united, Bertie turned to Long.

"Where is Short?" he asked.

"Don't know. He told me to take the girl and pull out. I did so; but what became of him is a conundrum."

"And not so much of a conundrum as it might be, after all."

These words were spoken at the tall detective's elbow.

He looked around and saw Short standing over the bound and helpless form of Red Cameron.

"Where did you get him?" asked Bertie.

"In there," replied Short, nodding in the direction of the smoldering rendezvous.

"I've been expecting every minute that that powder in the store room would blow up and send you hustling into kingdom come."

The powder was too well boxed for that. It was a quick fire, but not a very hot one."

"Where's Jose?" asked Bertie.

A trooper heard him and stepped forward.

"A man by that name was shot. It's the only killing there was in the whole business."

"Are all the other outlaws captured?"

"To a man."

"A good evening's work, Diamond Dick, Jr.!" said the old colonel, heartily. "We've captured Red Cameron and wiped out his gang. So the country is rid of another pest."

"I'm glad of it," said Bertie.

"All that remains," said Gillsey, "is to see that Red Cameron gets his due."

After recuperating the men and horses for a few hours, a return to the fort was commenced, and, just as the sunrise gun came echoing across the mesa, and "Old Glory" unfolded her glorious stars and stripes to the morning breeze, the little band of troopers came marching homeward.

The other troopers, who had been waiting on Powder River, lured there by Red Cameron's forged note, had already reached the fort.

Red Cameron was put in double chains and made to suffer solitary confinement.

The rest of the outlaws were put in the guard-house, with the exception of Bunker, whom Long persisted in carrying around, handcuffed to himself.

Grace, the colonel's daughter, was joyfully hailed on her return.

The poor girl, however, was almost worn out.

She had suffered a shock from which it would take her long to recover.

In time she once more became her old self, but the sights and scenes around Fort McPherson were hateful to her, and, in a few months, the colonel obtained

another command and moved East with his entire household.

On the morning following their arrival at the fort Messrs. Long & Short started for Denver with Bill Bunker.

Red Cameron was tried, found guilty of one or two murders, and eventually hanged.

The lieutenant whom he had wounded in the fight at the masquerade ball was not seriously injured.

Rather than have it known that he had been a participant in such a disgraceful scene, he made no complaint against the outlaw.

After a time, the lieutenant went East to the colonel's new post, but whether the attentions he paid the fair Grace were acceptable to that lady or not is the question.

Let us hope that they were.

The rank and file of Red Cameron's men received terms of various lengths in the penitentiary, where, it is presumed, they are now serving their time.

Bertie was warmly congratulated by the colonel for his tireless and clever work in this especial case.

Bertie, however, was modest and insisted that Long & Short were entitled to fully half of the praise.

"One moment more," said the colonel, "and the minister would have pronounced the words that bound my daughter to Red Cameron. You may not know it, perhaps, but you arrived on the scene that day in the gymnasium building just when most needed."

"I am glad of it."

"You have earned my everlasting gratitude."

"You did not talk that way at the time."

"Certainly not! Cameron had been playing a double part. He would come up from Tucson in his fine clothes and make a great display of wealth, and he seemed a perfect gentleman. Egad, I was quite taken with him; so I wasn't prepared for your statement when you said that he was Red Cameron."

"You could hardly believe Gillsey, either."

"It was only the abduction that settled the case with me. Here's my hand, Diamond Dick, Jr. If you ever want a friend you have one in me."

"Thank you."

Bertie shook the old warrior's hand and they parted.

THE END.

Next week's issue (No. 295) will contain "Diamond Dick, Jr.'s Mind Reader; or, Fighting an All-Star Combination." While going it alone in Arizona the young sport ran into all sorts of adventures. Did he dodge them? You can bet your life he didn't. When he struck the "Mind Reader" he started up against a few thrilling experiences. What was the "Mind Reader"? Who was he? Well, just read next week's issue to find out.



Whoop it up, boys! It's a hot contest.

"It vas der piggest sugsess uf der punch." That's what Fritz Dunder says about it, and he knows a good thing when he sees it.

Get into it at once, every one of you. Look on page 31 for full particulars.

The Desertion of Private Bowen.

(By Fred Garrigue, Ill.)

"Private Bowen tried to run the lines again last night, sir."

"Show him in here at once."

"Yes, sir." The first speaker was Sergeant Henderson, of the Eighteenth Indiana, and he was acting as orderly for Captain Collier, who was the second speaker in the above conversation. As the orderly left the room the captain seated himself and began muttering, half to himself and half out loud:

"I wonder why Bowen has acted this way. This is the third time this week that he has tried to run the lines. I hate to think that he is trying to desert—" His train of thought was interrupted by the entrance of Private Bowen. The captain spoke abruptly.

"Bowen," he said, "why did you try to run the lines last night?"

"I did not, sir," came the sharp response.

"What do you mean? Surely you do not deny that you were caught outside the lines last night?"

"So they say, sir, but I have no recollection of it." The captain looked squarely at Bowen as he made this assertion.

"Ever walk in your sleep, Bowen?" Bowen clutched at this ray of hope.

"I did when I was a youngster, sir."

"Well, Bowen, you were either walking in your sleep or else trying to—"

"Desert!" Bowen shot forth the word, his lip curling with scorn while his eyes flashed dangerously.

"Go to your tent, my boy, I will think this over. Please send Henderson in here to me. They exchanged salutes as Bowen left the tent. When the orderly entered the captain explained his theory to him.

"I think that Bowen is a somnambulist, Henderson. I mean to watch him closely to-night."

That evening Bowen was sound asleep when "taps" was sounded. But an hour later he noiselessly dressed himself. While Captain Collier was watching the tent he suddenly remembered the words of the surgeon whom he had talked with concerning sleep walkers. The surgeon's words were fresh in his mind. They were: "A

sudden climax to the dominant thought of a somnambulist is liable to prove fatal."

Just then Private Bowen, rifle in hand, marched out of his tent. His eyes were wide open, but they had a peculiar, glassy appearance. As the captain had warned the sentry, Private Bowen was allowed to pass freely through the Union lines, with Captain Collier close behind him. Bowen seemed able to pick out the best going, for he readily found and followed a well-beaten path.

They had covered about a mile when Collier thought that he would bring matters to a speedy termination. He readily overtook Bowen and seized his arm. Bowen merely turned his glassy eyes at the captain, and then went along faster than before. The captain was sadly perplexed. He dared not awake Bowen, for fear of disastrous consequences. The only thing to do was to follow him until he should see fit to stop.

All that night this strange couple marched on, side by side. It was a quarter past three by the captain's watch when Bowen suddenly stopped by the side of a hay mow. Bowen fell asleep instantly on lying down, but the weary captain dared not follow his example, for he did not know but what Bowen might start off again.

It was broad daylight when Bowen, with a long-drawn sigh, at last woke up. He gazed about him in amazement.

"Where am I?" he asked, on observing Captain Collier.

"Twenty miles from camp and under arrest for attempted desertion," replied the captain, in the sternest voice he could muster up, although his heart went out to the poor boy at his side. I say boy, for Bowen was not yet twenty.

They hired horses and got back to camp inside of two hours. Bowen had assured the captain that he knew nothing of his adventures on the night before, and the kind-hearted Collier had told Bowen that he would "fix" things.

When they reached camp Captain Collier went to sleep and slept till nearly five. Then he conferred with Sergeant Henderson as to what should be done about Bowen's peculiar case. They had not reached a decision at half-past nine when they were suddenly startled by a

rifle shot. They rushed from the tent and saw Private Bowen lying on the ground with a sentry standing over him.

"I guess I caught him this time, captain," said the sentry, as he reloaded his gun.

They carefully looked over the body, but found no mark of a bullet. Then Captain Collier again thought of the surgeon's words: "The sudden climax to the dominant thought of a somnambulist is liable to prove fatal."

For Private Bowen was dead.

A Robbery Prevented.

(By Gae Medbury, New York.)

Although the saying, "If at first you don't succeed, try again," is all right in some things, yet there are cases where it is better to leave things alone the second time, as I can prove by this story, which is true.

Last fall three men dropped off the train here, and after a walk of four miles arrived at Stockton.

In the night they forced a door of the bank, and entered, but as they opened an inner door they set a burglar alarm off and they left so suddenly that they left all their tools.

It happened that the wire which connected the bank and house was broken, but the alarm did the work.

That was the first attempt, and if the fellows had let it go at that they would not be behind prison bars, but they did not and so they brought about their own downfall.

This spring three men got off the train here and went toward Stockton, but the station agent saw them, and as he remembered how the three men who attempted to rob the bank before looked, he knew they were the same.

As soon as he found that they were the would-be robbers he telephoned to Stockton and told them to be on the lookout for them.

That night another attempt was made to rob the bank, but, of course, failed, as the people had been warned.

Although the people were warned, the robbers escaped, but some days after a trace of them was found in Dunkirk, and the station agent was sent for to identify them, which he did, and they are now in prison where they belong.

A Brave Little Bugler.

(By Jimmer Wrigley.)

The scene of this story is laid in Southwest Montana. It was on one of those nights which precedes a terrible blizzard.

A young boy of about sixteen years of age is lying neatly wrapped in an army blanket, he is lying near the smoldering embers of a campfire.

As he lay there he thought he heard a footstep and turned over to see who it was, but he saw no one. He yawned, turned back, and was nearly asleep again when he heard the same noise. He lay still and thought he would watch for the intruder. In a few moments he saw an Indian in warpaint steal up near the fire. He

reached for his bugle, but the moment he laid his hand on it the Indian raised a gleaming knife and grunted:

"Me kill you!"

At this critical moment Chris—for that was the brave little bugler's name—saw his captain rise softly from his blanket and aim, pull the trigger, and fire; the Indian fell a lifeless corpse at Chris' feet.

Although the shot had aroused the camp, Chris blew his bugle loudly. The captain then told him to sound the advance, and he did so.

The Indians had by this time opened a scathing fire on the little camp, and the soldiers were returning it with interest. Chris was at the front with his captain when a bullet entered his ankle.

"Captain, I am wounded," he said.

"Go to the rear, my boy."

"I would rather stay with you, sir."

"All right, then," answered the captain.

The soldiers were driving the Indians now, and just as victory seemed sure the brave old captain was seriously wounded.

Chris turned to the men and said:

"Come on, boys, we will whip them yet." The men responded with a cheer of assent. Chris saw the men on the left wavering and shouted:

"Boys, I am wounded in four places, but I have not given up yet."

The men began to work their guns faster. The fight continued fiercely.

"The Indians have shot me again," he said, calmly, to his men.

Once more Chris spoke, but faintly.

"They have shot me again."

Chris was put on a litter and carried to the rear. The Indians were soon defeated, and the captain was found to be shot in his side. Chris had seven wounds, and it was fully three months before he recovered. He was then made a lieutenant in the regular army, although only seventeen.

Two years later the old captain was made a major, and Chris was made Captain Christopher White, with good chances of becoming a colonel in the regular army soon.

Jack's Sweetheart.

(By John Miller, Pa.)

The scene is laid in a mining camp in the West. A young girl is on trial for horse stealing. I admit, it does not seem as if honest men could find a girl—and a handsome one, at that—guilty, but that was what they did.

"Well, boys," said the judge, "what is the verdict of this court?"

"We, the jury, find that the girl is guilty and that she be hanged by the neck until dead."

A murmur of surprise ran over that rough audience, and a handsome young man by the name of Jack Miller, who, by the way, was my uncle, arose and said:

"Boys, I never thought I would see the time that the men of this camp would hang a woman, and I, for one, will do my best to prevent it."

Well, after a long talk, it was agreed that she should go free. Jack took her home, and it was then he told her

that he loved her. The answer that Jack received made him as happy a man as ever lived and everything seemed bright till one night about two weeks after the trial. The mining camp is all asleep but the guard, and as he walks to an fro a figure glides up and stabs him to the heart. It then glides about the camp till at last it comes to Jack, and as the figure leans over him with upraised knife, it can be seen that it is a girl. The hand drops to her side, and as she looks down on that handsome face, she murmurs:

"No, I can't do it, for I love him."

She places a kiss on his lips and softly glides away.

Next morning it is found that the twelve jurymen have been murdered and as the girl is missing it is blamed on her. Poor Jack, he said it was his fault, and at the end of a week he had died of a broken heart. The honest miners buried him in a lonely grave. Two years later a girl is kneeling beside that grave, and the once handsome face is now pale and drawn. Next morning the miners find her corpse and a note requesting that she be buried beside her sweetheart Jack.

When I visited that camp, I was shown the two graves at my request. Two stones mark the place, and on one is "Jack," on the other "Jack's Sweetheart."

An Odd Job.

(By J. Everett Ewing, N. C.)

"Say, kid, do you want a job?"

This was fired at Burt Harris, a lad about sixteen years of age. The "kid" was standing on the corner of Ninth and Green streets, with a number of other youths, all of whom were dressed better than Burt.

Probably these boys would have been ashamed to be seen with—or too "stuck up" to notice—him, had he not just stopped a fight in time to save the combatants from half killing each other, and these boys were now plying him with questions so as to get to the bottom of the affair, when a rather flashily dressed, sporty-looking "gent" on the opposite corner accosted the bunch with the opening words.

Burt, thinking rightly that he was the one addressed, looked up quickly and telling the boys he would tell them all about the "scrap" some other time, left them and crossed the street. Speaking respectfully, though he did not like the man's looks, he asked what kind of a job it was.

"If you will deliver this package to J. H. Hardesty, No. 1427 Hayden street, and meet me here in one hour I'll give you a dollar," explained the sporty-looking "gent." "But," he cautioned, "give it to no one but Mr. Hardesty."

"But I don't know who you are, or that I get my pay."

"Just ask for Walter Smith, at the cafe, over on the opposite corner, there," pointing at the door of a half restaurant, half saloon across the street.

"All O. K. I'll be back in one hour, sir."

With this Burt took the package and started off at a brisk walk.

After about twenty minutes Burt came to an old, odd-looking house which bore the right number.

Burt knocked at the door. No sooner had he done so than it was opened by an officer in uniform.

The officer grabbed him by the shoulder and pushed him violently into a room in which some half dozen policemen were gathered.

All this happened so quickly that Burt had no chance to speak, but now he asked, "What does this mean?"

"It means that we have been looking for you for a good while, and now that we have you, I'll tell you that you are under arrest," spoke one of the officers, as he clapped the "bracelets" on Burt's wrists.

"But I have done nothing wrong," expostulated Burt.

"Oh, no, you fellows never do anything wrong, after you're caught," sneered the officer.

"Well, what crime have I committed? What am I arrested for?"

"Counterfeiting."

The package which Burt had carried had been opened and was found to contain \$5250 in paper.

Burt was so taken aback that his face flushed and paled by turns. This was at once taken as an evidence of his guilt; the "hurry-up" wagon was 'phoned for, and Burt was soon before the sergeant.

"What have you got to say for yourself?" asked the sergeant.

Burt told his story in a straightforward manner, omitting nothing.

Within a half hour after telling his story three policemen brought in the sporty "gent," Walter Smith.

When this happened the sergeant turned to Burt and asked him several questions, and from the answers found that Burt was innocent of any attempt at wrongdoing. Burt gave the names and addresses of those he knew of the boys with whom he stood on the corner when he had got his job.

Several of them were summoned, and they told enough to clear the lad.

When the trial came up both Walter Smith and J. H. Hardesty were convicted and given long terms of imprisonment.

Burt did not get his dollar for carrying the package, but he got \$50 for aiding the police in capturing the counterfeiters.

The police had been onto Hardesty for some time, but did not know who his partner was, until Burt told his story to the sergeant.

Burt's odd job was not so odd as the termination of it, but he persisted in having me call it "An Odd Job."

Just a Mistake.

(By J. Warren Horton, Mass.)

Not very long ago two little negro boys thought they should like to go camping out, so one fine morning they started out. Sam, that was one of the boys, came down to the river carrying an old musket and an ax, while in his pockets were fish lines and hooks. He had a powder horn and bullet pouch slung over his shoulder.

He put the gun and ax in the canoe and started down stream. After he had gone about half a mile he saw Mose, his friend, coming out of his father's cabin and down toward the river. He had a gun also. He got in the canoe and they set off in high glee.

"I's got der stop down der billage," said Mose, as the canoe rounded a bend in the river.

At this point the river was joined by another, and as there was quite a current they did not have to paddle again.

"What's that noise?" asked Sam, as a crackling was heard in the bushes.

"Don't know," said Mose, "looks like rain."

When they got to the village Mose got out, but soon came back with a banjo.

"I've been saving up my money," he explained.

After a while they came to a good place in a grove of wood. They set about building a shanty of bark and when it was done it was too late to go hunting, but they had some food and so did not go to bed hungry. They had got in some wood in case of rain, and after supper went to bed.

About three o'clock Mose heard a noise and got up to look out.

What was his horror to see an animal. He got what he thought was a stick of wood, but it was his banjo instead, though he didn't know it. He threw it at the animal, but it hit a tree. They watched till morning, and then, to their disgust, found it was only Sam's dog, and Mose had broken one of his banjo strings. They went home that day.

The Only Witness.

(By F. J. Sperry, Ohio.)

Willis Winquist was an old shoemaker, and the years of grief and toil had caused his large blue eyes to become dimmed with tears. His cheeks were pale and his high and broad forehead had become so wrinkled that he looked old and decrepit.

The night was cold and stormy, and the wind was blowing fiercely through the old elm trees, and as the little old cobbler's clock was ticking the hour of ten the door suddenly opened and a tall, handsome young man entered the room.

He removed his hat and in a few short strides he was standing before the old shoemaker.

The old man seemed to be nervous, and with a cry of pain he exclaimed, in a whisper:

"My God! Frederick Lang, have you returned to this country to hound me down like a dog? You come here to-night to wring a confession from me, but as sure as God is my guide in all noble things I will swear that you were the guilty murderer of your poor old father when we were in the leather trust as partners."

"You lie, like a Spaniard, you—you old sea dog," hissed the angry young man, that the old cobbler accused of murdering his own father in cold blood. "You cannot prove it, and I shall send you to the gallows, for nobody will believe you for you are dishonest and you have stained your fingers in crime."

"Ha! ha! old man, luck is against you this time, and you must suffer for a great criminal offense," laughed Frederick Lang as he looked at the old man in a threatening manner.

"I can prove to the world my innocence, and when the proper time comes, you, yes you, Frederick Lang, will pay the penalty instead of me," sobbed the old man as he buried his face in his hands.

"Bring forth your witnesses whenever you desire, to convict me, for I am only too anxious to see your false

confederates; and old man, just bear in mind when the proper time comes, I will be at the prison when the execution takes place," laughed Frederick Lang, as he was about to take his departure.

But, lo! a woman in black met him at the door, and in another moment she was at his side. He recoiled in anguish and fear, for he had seen that face and those dark, blazing eyes before.

"Stand back! you coward, I have heard your insults, and as a woman who is a true and loving daughter, I am here to protect my poor old father, whom you accuse of murdering your father," cried the woman, as she clasped her hand firmly upon the shoulder of Frederick Lang.

He wrenched and swore, but to no avail, nor could he free himself from the iron grip of the woman's hand. He stood with bowed head, and with a curse upon his rum-soaked lips he exclaimed:

"Foiled at last, and by a beautiful woman who possesses great hypnotic power, for I cannot free myself from her grasp."

"Ha, ha! Frederick Lang, so you will be pleased to meet the person that watched you when you pierced your poor old father's heart with a glass-pointed dagger," hissed the woman, as she looked him in the face. "I was the only witness to that awful crime, and you are the murderer, instead of poor old father."

"My God! she knows it all," cried the wretch; "for God's sake, forgive me, Miss Winquist. Keep this horrible deed a secret as long as you live, and as for myself, if you will not send me to prison, I will go to Italy and try and become a man."

"Go! and if you ever return I shall have you arrested and duly punished."

Frederick Lang opened the door and with tears in his eyes, and with a mocking smile upon his lips he was soon enveloped in the darkness.

The papers announced one morning that Hon. Frederick Lang, of New York was aboard the "French bark" to Italy to wed a famous French beauty. Poor old Willis Winquist never recovered from the cruel treatment that Frederick Lang had heaped upon him, and one morning he was found dead in his little shop in Forrer street.

A Fight in the Woods.


(By John Jones, Pa.)

One day about four years ago the shaft where I was working was idle. I and a friend of mine was going through the forest to the company store. We were going along a railroad through the forest when a man drew up from the brush with a revolver in his hand and fired.

At hearing the shot I and my friend ran for half an hour. When we stopped my friend said:

"Your neck is bleeding, John."

Three hours after the doctor told me I was shot in the neck and had a narrow escape of losing my life.

 \$1 worth of Tricks & Make-ups, sent postpaid for 25 cent stamps or silver. A nice Moustache or full Beard, Irish or Side Whiskers, any color, bottle Spirit Gum to stick them on. Box of Burnt Cork to blacken up. Jar, Rubber Mouth, big teeth, secret & apparatus for performing the great vanishing half-dollar trick. This big offer is to get your address to send my large illus. cat. of plays, wigs, tricks & magic, latest novelties. Mention paper you saw this in and I will also put in a Heavy GOLD plate finger Ring FREE, send this. Address: Chas. Marshall, Mfr., Lockport, N. Y.

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- 271—Diamond Dick's Blacklist; or, Branded as Traitors.
- 272—Diamond Dick's Railroad Deal; or, The Message from Midnight Pass.
- 273—Diamond Dick's Set-to with the Keever Gang; or, The Trouble with No. 7.
- 274—Diamond Dick and the Hannibal County Desperadoes; or, Against Judge and Jury.
- 275—Diamond Dick's Moonlight Attack; or, The Freight Thieves of the T. N. & P. Railroad.
- 276—Diamond Dick's Deadly Charge; or, The Cattle Rustler's Ambush.
- 277—Diamond Dick on the Bean Trail; or, Black Bill's Doom.
- 278—Diamond Dick in Chicago; or, A Bold Game in the Metropolis.
- 279—Diamond Dick's Quick Action; or, The Fastest Fight on Record.
- 280—Diamond Dick's Fair Enemy; or, The Plot of the Mexican Girl.
- 281—Diamond Dick and the Express Robbers; or, Tornado Kate's Ten Strike.
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